

Family Resource Agency of North Georgia Community Assessment 2025



Mission: "To impact our communities through education, advocacy, and care."

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Head Start Performance Standards-Community Assessment

1302.11 Determining community strengths, needs, and resources

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-11-determining-community-strengths-needs-resources>

(b) Community wide strategic planning and needs assessment:

(1) To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum:

(i) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:

(A) Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432 (6)(A));

(B) Children in foster care; and

(C) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;

(ii) The education, health, nutrition and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being;

(iii) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;

(iv) Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served;

(v) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and,

(vi) Strengths of the community.

(2) A program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten- (including an assessment of how the pre-kindergartens available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources.

(3) A program must consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the program's eligible funded enrollment. A program must not enroll children from diverse economic backgrounds if it would result in a program serving less than its eligible funded enrollment.

Executive Summary

A comprehensive Community Assessment is mandated by Head Start Performance Standards 1302.11 (b). This assessment is conducted on a five-year cycle with updates in the interim years. The primary purpose is to gather data on available services for children and families, identify service gaps, and guide program planning. The collected information is used to determine the appropriate operation of the Head Start Program and is included in the grant application (ACYF-IM-HS-00-12). This document presents the complete in-depth Community Assessment for 2025.

Key Issues Identified:

Service Gaps for Eligible Children; There is a significant gap between the number of eligible children and those being served, especially in Early Head Start (EHS).

Whitfield County has the highest need across all categories due to its large population and poverty rate.

Chattooga County, with a poverty rate of 20.7%, serves a very small percentage of its eligible children.

Additional resources, funding, or program expansion are needed to bridge this gap and provide early childhood services to more children in need.

1. Need for Affordable Infant/Toddler Care; There is a continuous need for affordable, quality infant/toddler care in the service area.

This need is supported by the high rate of teen pregnancies among women who have not graduated high school and the pregnancy rates among 15 to 19-year-old women, which are higher than the averages for Georgia and the United States.

2. Family Needs Families have various needs that we will continue to address, including obtaining General Education Diplomas (GED), securing stable housing for homeless families, financial literacy/planning, overcoming language barriers, and access to continuous dental care.

Family Service Specialists work closely with families through individual interactions, Family Progress Meetings, and Parent Cafés to provide resources and support.

When additional information is needed, referrals are made, or partnerships with other community agencies are provided for skill development, training, and classes.

Family Resource Agency of N. GA offers a variety of trainings to parents, including but not limited to:

- Advocacy/Transitioning
- Child Abuse Prevention
- First Aid/CPR
- Growth & Development
- Medical/Dental Care and Support
- Mental Health Care and Support
- Parenting Skills
- Personal Growth and Development
- Nutrition
- Safety Practices
- Second Steps Anti-Violence Program
- Stress Management
- The 2025 Community Assessment highlights critical areas where Family Resource Agency of North Georgia can make a significant impact. Addressing the service gaps for eligible children, the need for affordable infant/toddler care, and the diverse needs of families are paramount to fostering a supportive and nurturing environment for the community.

Family Resource Agency of North Georgia-National Goals and Objectives



Parent, Family, and Community Engagement:

Our program follows the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework, which categorizes family goals into seven key outcomes:

1. Family Well-Being
2. Positive Parent-Child Relationships
3. Families as Lifelong Educators
4. Families as Learners
5. Family Engagement in Transitions
6. Family Connections to Peers and Community
7. Families as Advocates and Leaders

Strong family outcomes directly support children's school readiness. Family Service Specialists actively engage parents, providing guidance and resources to help them achieve their goals. To track progress, our program assesses Family Outcomes three times per year—fall, winter, and spring.



School Readiness Statement:

Our program is guided by the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Parent-Family-Community Engagement Framework, Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), and the requirements and expectations of local schools. These frameworks shape our curriculum implementation, ongoing assessment of children's progress, and overall preparation for school success. We define School Readiness as ensuring that every child enters school prepared to learn, building on early learning experiences in Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K that foster success in all areas of development, as outlined in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. To monitor progress, our program evaluates Child Outcomes three times per year—in the fall, winter, and spring.

Service Area County Characteristics & Map

Family Resource Agency of North Georgia offers Head Start, Pre-K, Early Head Start, and Childcare Partnership services to children and families across six counties in the state's northwest corner. These counties share borders with Tennessee to the north and Alabama to the west. Collectively, they encompass approximately 1,725 square miles, characterized by rural landscapes and the mountainous terrain of the Chattahoochee National Forest. The region predominantly consists of small towns and villages.

Catoosa - 162.7 - Smallest county, 49% forest (Chattahoochee National Forest). Borders Tennessee.

Chattooga - 314.0 - Third largest, 71.7% forest. Borders Alabama.

Dade - 174.1 - Second smallest, 70.1% forest. Flanked by Lookout and Sand Mountains. Borders Alabama & Tennessee.

Murray - 336.9 - Second largest, 73.9% forest. Contains Blue Ridge Mountain Area. Borders Tennessee.

Walker - 446.7 - Largest county, 64.6% forest. Encompasses part of Chattahoochee National Forest.

Whitfield - 290.7 - Fourth largest, 53.4% forest. Mountainous terrain. Borders Tennessee

nwgrc.org-accessed 3-6-2025

As of 2025, the largest city within the six-county service area is Dalton, located in Whitfield County, with a population of 34,508. Following Dalton, Fort Oglethorpe, spanning Catoosa and Walker counties, has a population of 10,677.

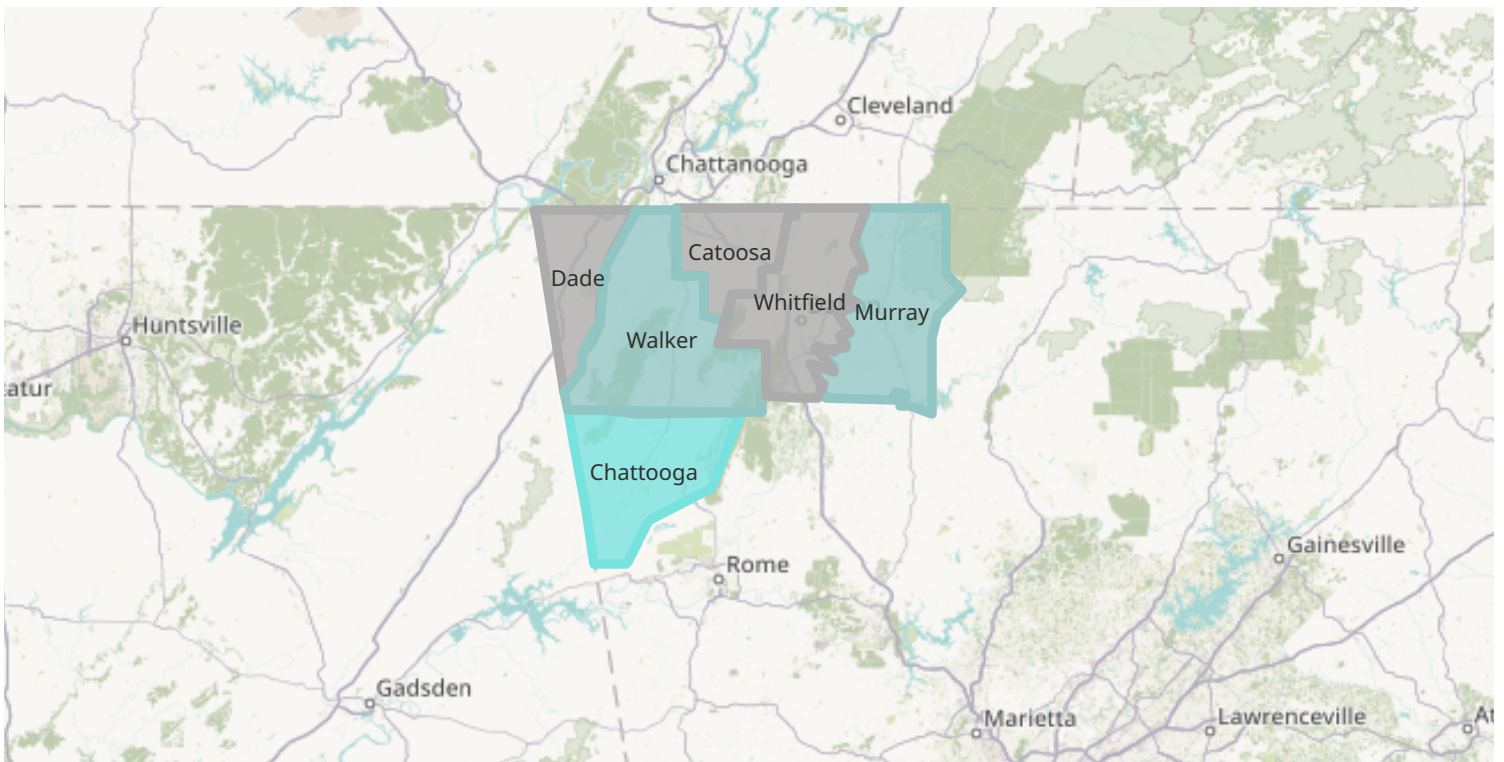
Other notable cities in the region include:

- Rossville in Walker County: 3,980 residents
- Chickamauga in Walker County: 2,917 residents
- Ringgold in Catoosa County: 3,414 residents
- Trenton in Dade County: 2,195 residents

Collectively, the six-county service area, comprising Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray, Walker, and Whitfield counties, has a total population of approximately 322,362.

It's important to note that these numbers may not account for undocumented children and families residing within these counties.

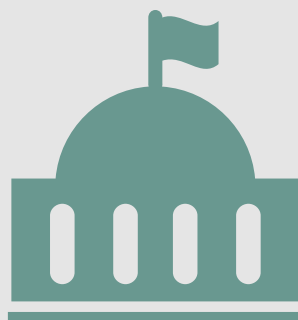
(georgia-demographics.com)-accessed 3-6-2025



County Government-Service Area

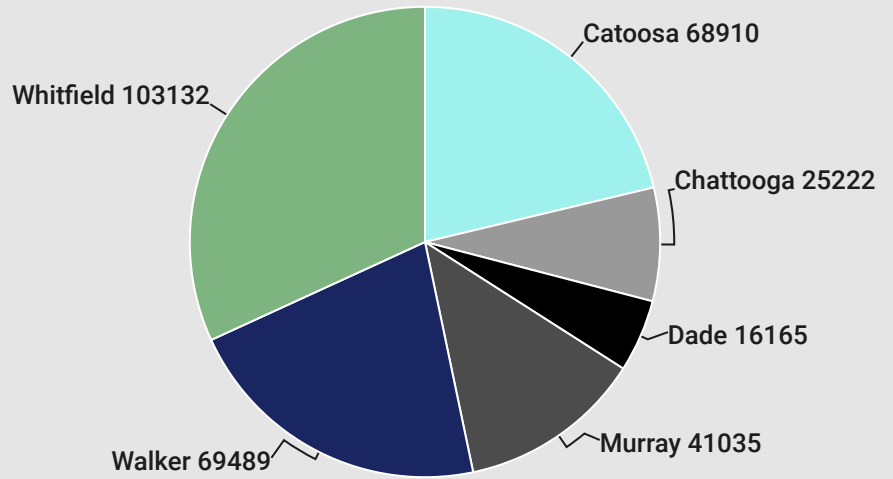
These governance structures reflect the diverse approaches to local administration in Northwest Georgia, with some counties maintaining Sole Commissioner systems and others operating under Boards of Commissioners.

County	Governing Authority
Catoosa	Governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners, with members elected by district and the chairman elected at-large. The Board sets policies, enacts ordinances, and oversees county operations.
Chattooga	Operates under a Sole Commissioner system, where a single official holds both legislative and executive authority, managing county affairs and collaborating with other agencies.
Dade	Transitioned from a Sole Commissioner to a Board of Commissioners structure, comprising multiple members who share legislative and executive responsibilities.
Murray	Utilizes a Sole Commissioner form of government, with one official overseeing all legislative and executive functions
Walker	Formerly under a Sole Commissioner system, it transitioned to a five-member Board of Commissioners in 2021. This board consists of four district-elected commissioners and a chairperson elected at-large, collectively managing county operations.
Whitfield	Governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners, with each member elected from one of five districts. The Board is responsible for setting policies, managing finances, adopting ordinances, and overseeing land use decisions.

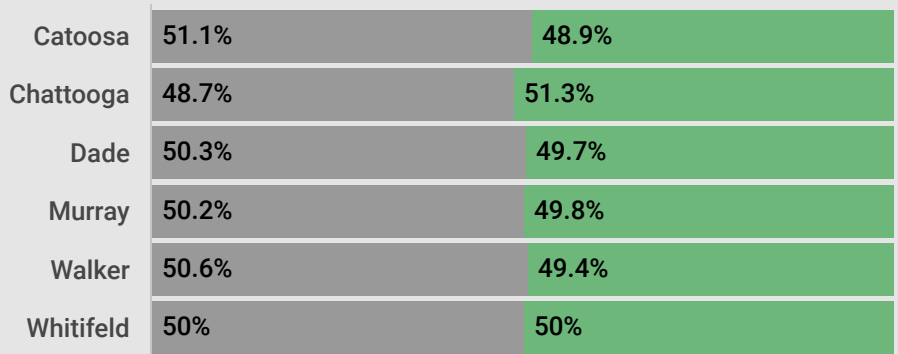


Population-Service Area Counties

- Whitfield County has the largest population among the six counties, with over 103,000 residents.
- Catoosa County and Walker County have similar population sizes, both around 68,000.
- Murray County has a moderate population size of about 41,000.
- Chattooga County and Dade County have the smallest populations, with approximately 25,000 and 16,000 residents.



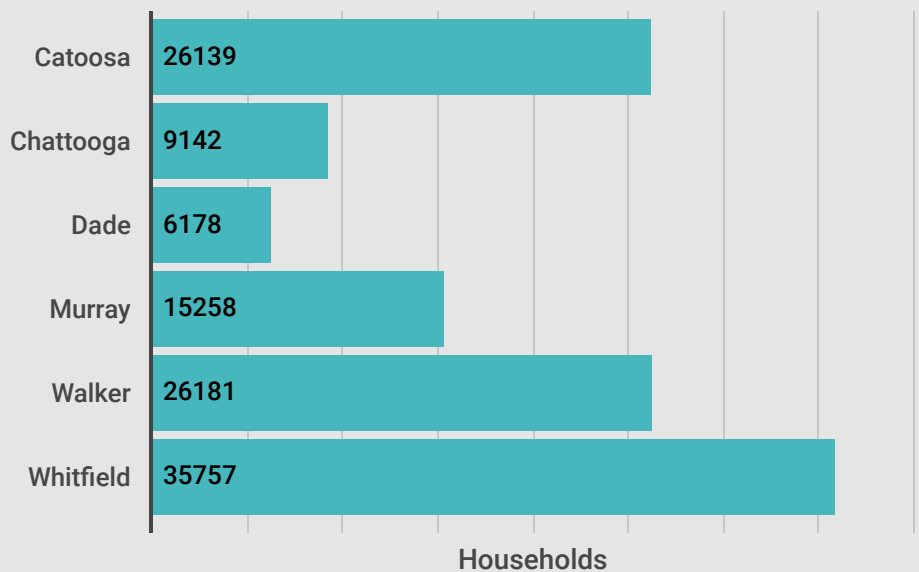
- Whitfield County has the largest population of both males and females.
- Chattooga County has the smallest population of both males and females.
- The gender distribution is relatively balanced in all counties, with slight variations.



● Females ● Males

Whitfield County has the highest number of households and the largest average household size.

- Catoosa County has the highest median household income.
- Chattooga County has the lowest median household income and the smallest number of households.
- Murray County has the highest percentage of households with children under 18.
- Chattooga County has the highest percentage of households with individuals 65 and over.

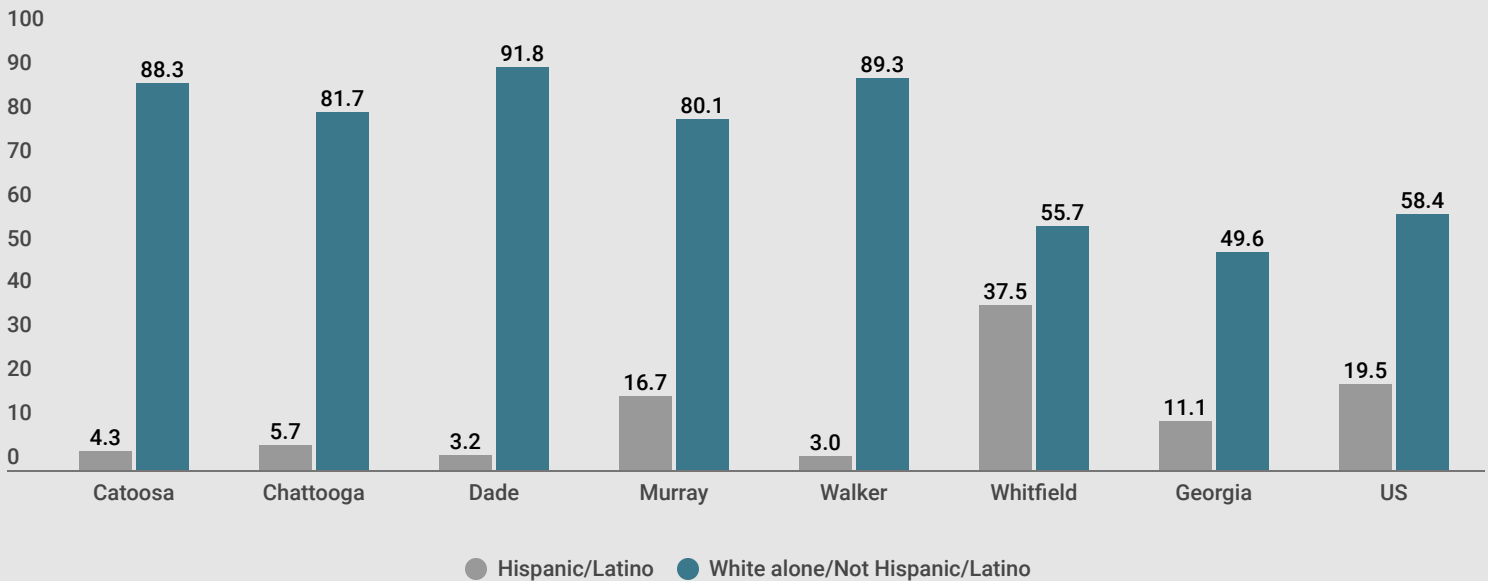


Race and Hispanic Origin-Service Area

This table presents racial and ethnic demographics for the service area counties, Georgia, and the United States. It includes percentages of populations identifying as White, Black or African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other, and Two or More Races.

Service Area	White	Black or African American	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian/Other	Two or More Races
Catoosa County	91.9	3.6	0.5	1.6	0.2	2.2
Chattooga County	86	10	0.6	0.6	0.4	2.4
Dade County	94.5	1.9	0.7	1.0	0.1	1.9
Murray County	94.7	1.7	1.1	0.7	0.3	1.6
Walker County	91.8	4.9	0.5	0.8	0.1	2.0
Whitfield County	90.1	4.5	1.6	1.7	0.3	1.8
Georgia	58.7	33.2	0.6	4.9	0.1	2.5
United States	75.3	13.7	1.3	6.4	0.3	3.1

- Whitfield County has the highest percentage of Hispanic or Latino residents at 37.5%.
- Catoosa County and Walker County have similar racial compositions, with a high percentage of White residents.
- Chattooga County has a notable percentage of Black or African American residents at 9.5%.
- Murray County has a diverse racial composition with a significant percentage of residents identifying as Two or More Races.



Languages Spoken-Service Area

	People Who Speak a Language other than English at Home	People Who Speak Language Less than Very Well	People Who Speak Spanish at Home
Catoosa	4.8%	1.5%	2.4%
Chattooga	5.6%	2.8%	4.9%
Dade	3.6%	0.7%	2.2%
Murray	12.9%	4.9%	12.3%
Walker	2.2%	0.7%	1.3%
Whitfield	30.4%	14%	29%
Service Area Average	9.91%	4.1%	8.68%
Georgia	15%	5.7%	8.4%
United States	22%	8.4%	13.4%

As of the most recent data available (2019-2023), Family Resource Agency of North Georgia's service area counties exhibit::

Residents speaking a language other than English at home: 9.91%

Residents speaking English less than "very well": 4.1%

Residents speaking Spanish at home: 8.68%

Focusing on Whitfield County, the linguistic landscape is even more pronounced:

Residents speaking a language other than English at home: 30.4%

Residents speaking English less than "very well": 14.0%

Residents speaking Spanish at home: 29.0%

In the public schools of Whitfield County, the demographic distribution is as follows:

Hispanic/Latino students: 45.5%

White students: 48.9%

Other ethnicities: 5.6%

These statistics reflect the significant presence of Spanish-speaking individuals in Whitfield County, highlighting the importance of language accessibility and support services.

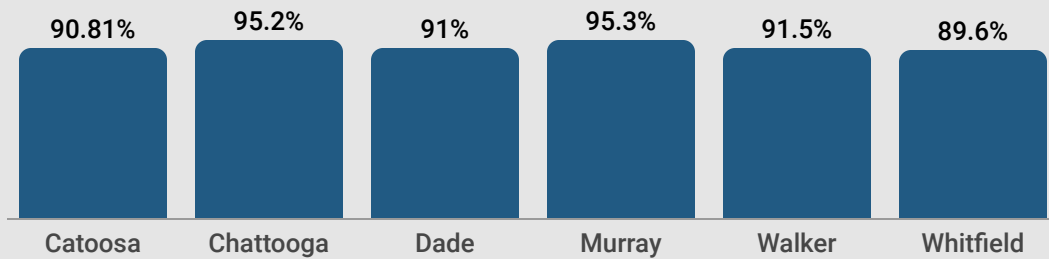
Education-Service Area

Georgia High School Graduation Rates Reached a Record High in 2024-Georgia's high school seniors set a new milestone, achieving the highest graduation rate in the state's history. The four-year graduation rate climbed to 85.4% in 2024, up from 84.4% in 2023—marking an all-time high.

State School Superintendent Richard Woods praised the Class of 2024 for their resilience and dedication:

"I offer my congratulations to Georgia's Class of 2024 on this historic achievement. These students faced immense challenges throughout their school careers—starting middle school just as the pandemic struck in 2020. We have worked tirelessly to provide the necessary resources and support to ensure their success, and these results demonstrate the impact of Georgia's educators, families, and all those invested in our students' futures."

This achievement underscores the ongoing efforts to strengthen education in Georgia, ensuring students have the tools and support needed to thrive beyond high school.



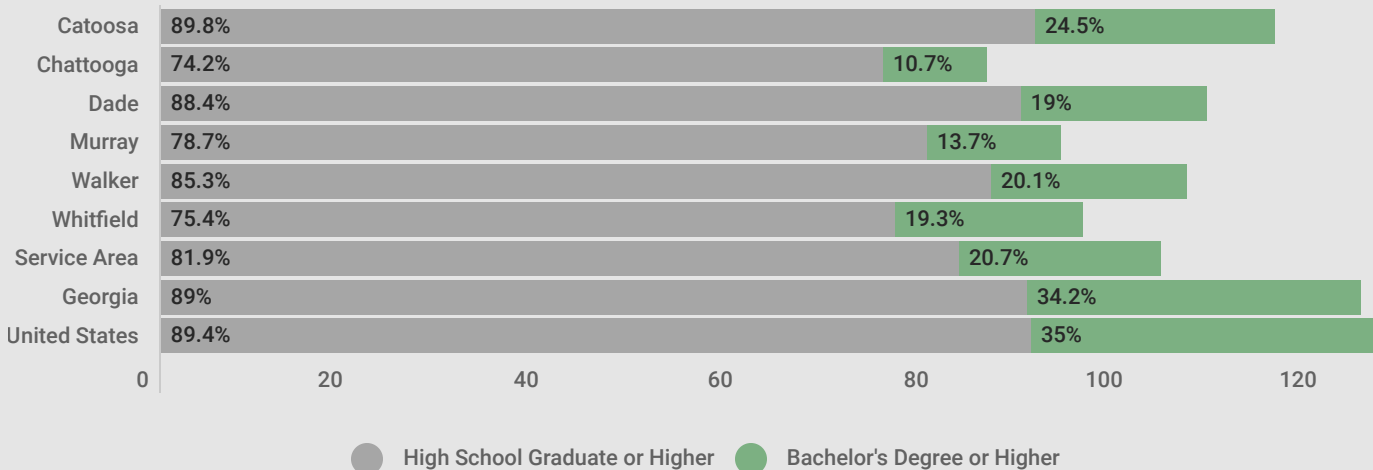
Data obtained from the Georgia Department of Education, 2024 Graduation Rate Report by county and state-accessed Jan. 2025

Degree Attainment-Service Area Counties:

Nationally, 35% of adults aged 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher. In Georgia, this rate is slightly lower at 34.2%. However, within the FRAGA service area, the percentage drops significantly to 20.7%, highlighting a critical gap in higher education attainment.

To bridge this gap and expand access to higher education, the region is served by several institutions, including:

- Georgia Northwestern Technical College (serving Catoosa, Walker, and Whitfield-Murray counties)
- Dalton State College (located in Whitfield County)
- Covenant College (based in Dade County)
- Expanding awareness of and access to these institutions is essential to improving degree attainment rates.



Data obtained from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA,US/PST045222>-accessed March 2025

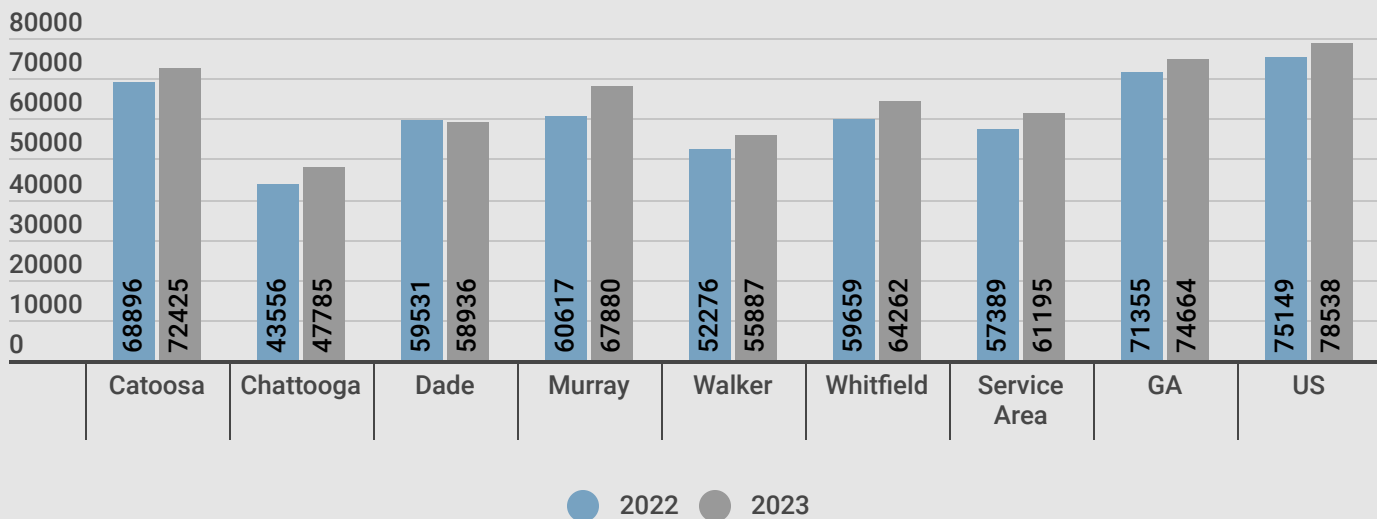
Income Rates-Service Area

Median Household Income Analysis:

The median household income represents the midpoint of income distribution, meaning half of households earn above this amount, while the other half earn below it.

In 2023, the average median income in the service area was \$61,195, which remains significantly lower than both the Georgia state median (\$74,664) and the national median (\$78,538).

Despite this gap, the service area has experienced income growth, with the median household income rising from \$57,389 in 2022 to \$61,195 in 2023—an increase of approximately 6.6%. This upward trend suggests economic improvement, though disparities compared to state and national levels indicate a continued need for support programs.

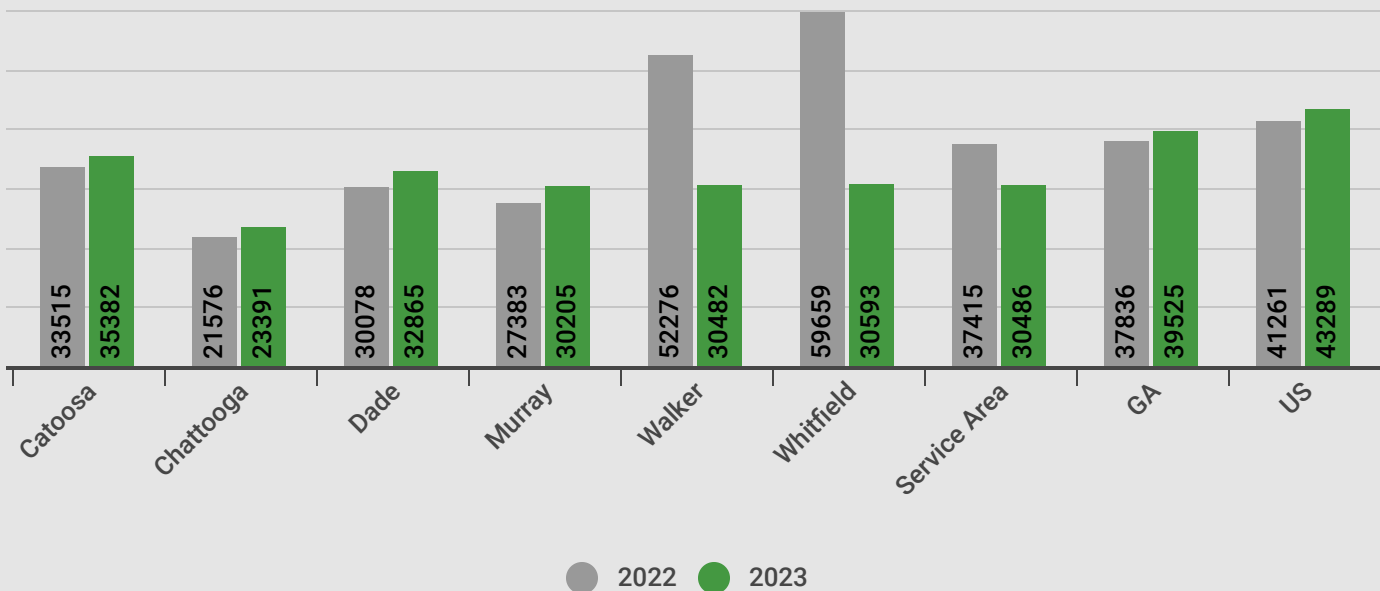


Per Capita Income Analysis

Per capita income represents the average income earned per person within a specific area. In the 2023 service area, per capita income varies significantly by county, ranging from \$23,391 in Chattooga County to \$35,382 in Catoosa County.

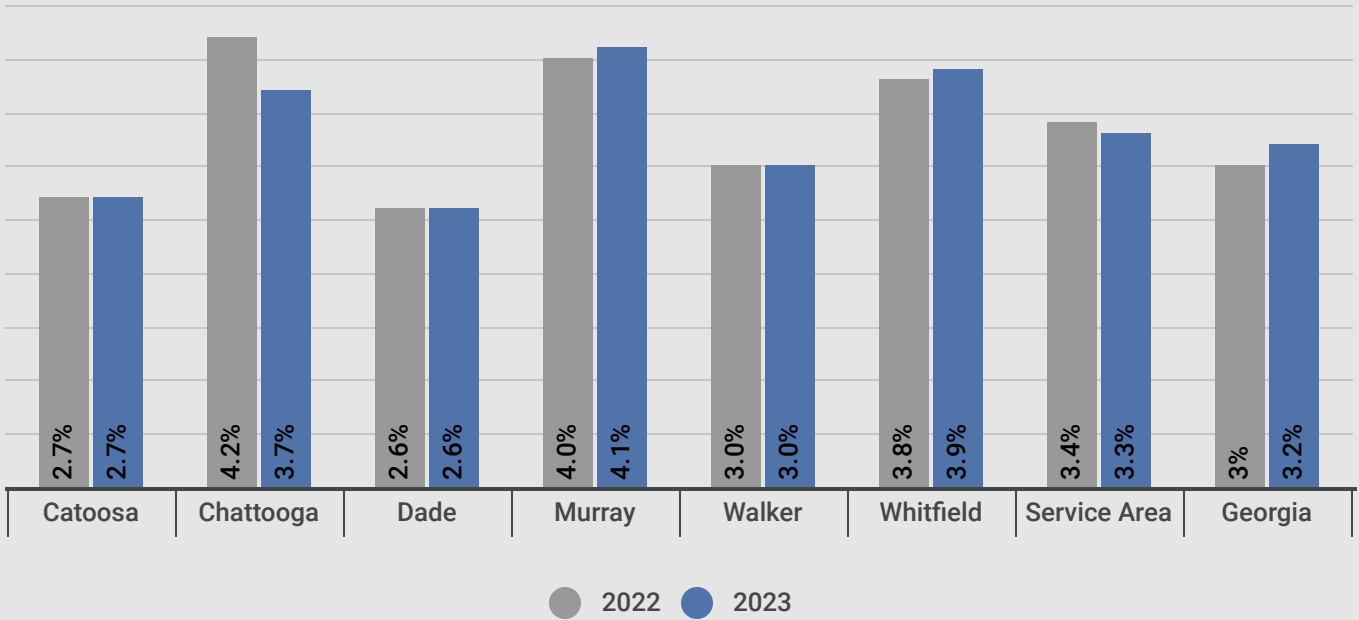
The average per capita income across the entire service area is \$30,486, which is substantially lower than both the Georgia state average (\$39,525) and the national average (\$43,289).

Notably, per capita income in the service area declined from \$37,415 in 2022 to \$30,486 in 2023, reflecting a drop of nearly 18.5%. This sharp decrease may indicate economic challenges, such as rising inflation, shifts in employment opportunities, or changes in local industries. The data suggests a need for workforce development programs and financial support initiatives.

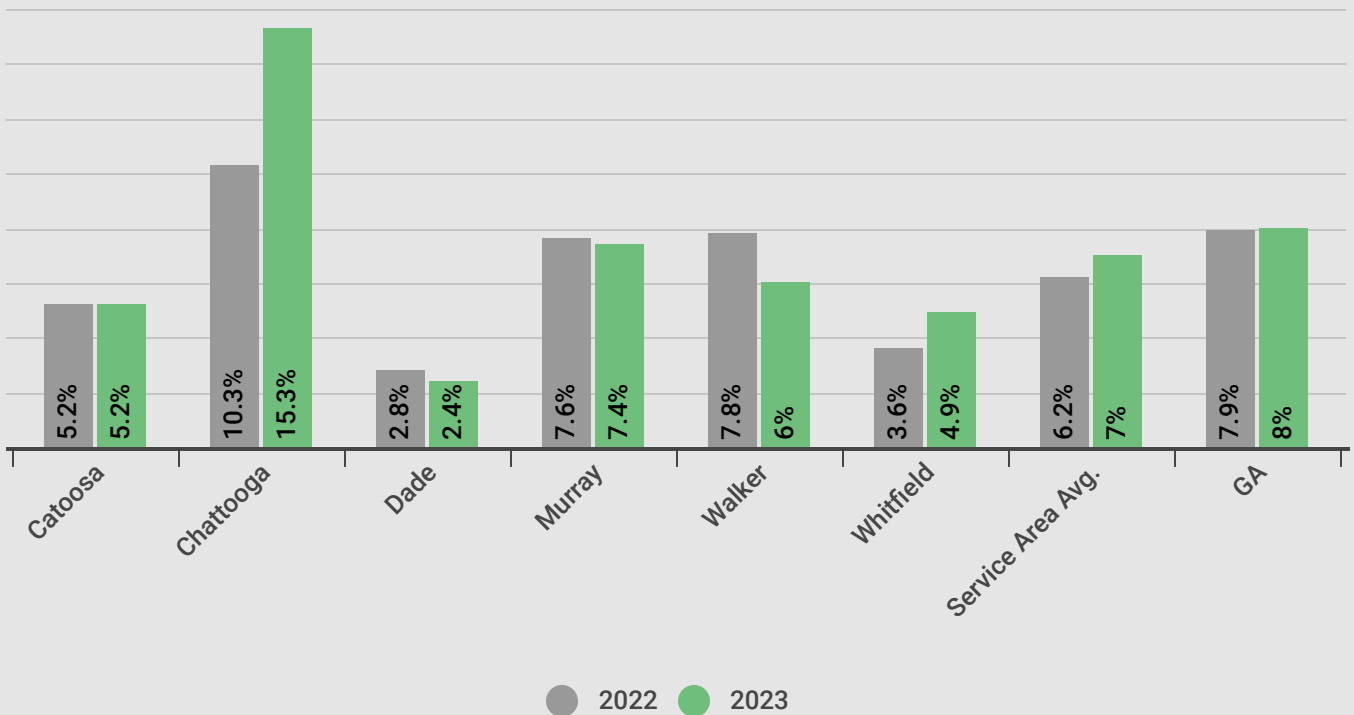


Unemployment/Secure Employment-Service Area

Unemployment: Georgia Kid's Count Data Center reports service area 2023 unemployment rates that vary from 2.6% (Dade County) to 4.2% (Chattooga). The service area had a 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.3% which was slightly higher than the 3.2% unemployment rate for Georgia. The service area unemployment rate decreased slightly from 3.4% in 2022 to 3.3% in 2023.



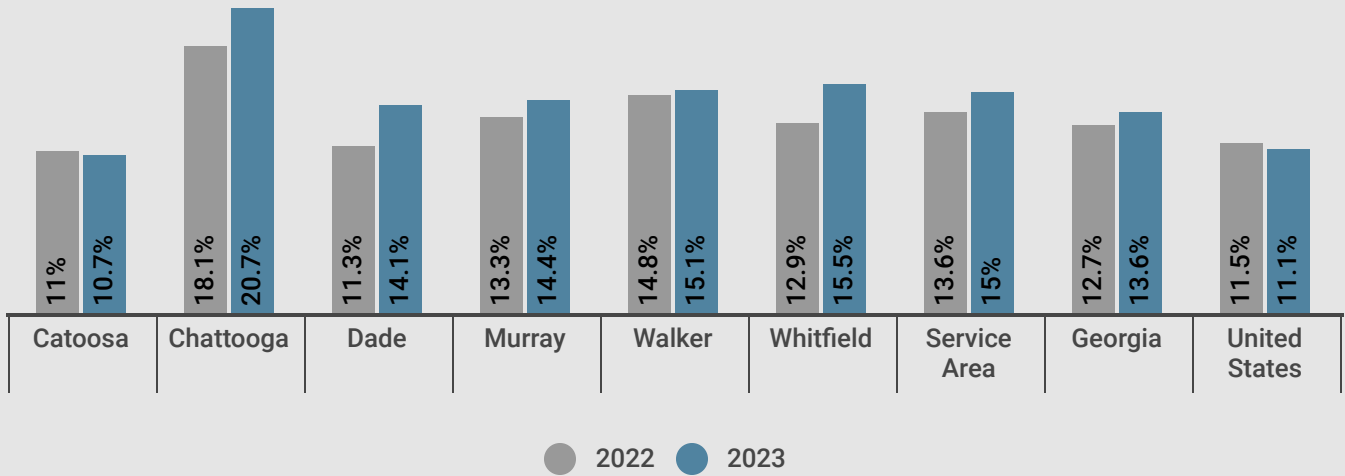
Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment: 2023 percentages range from 2.4% (Dade) to 15.3% (Chattooga). The 2023 service area average is 7% which is lower than the Georgia average of 8% Children whose parents lack secure employment increased in the service area from 6.2% in 2022 to 7% in 2023.



Poverty Rates-Service Area

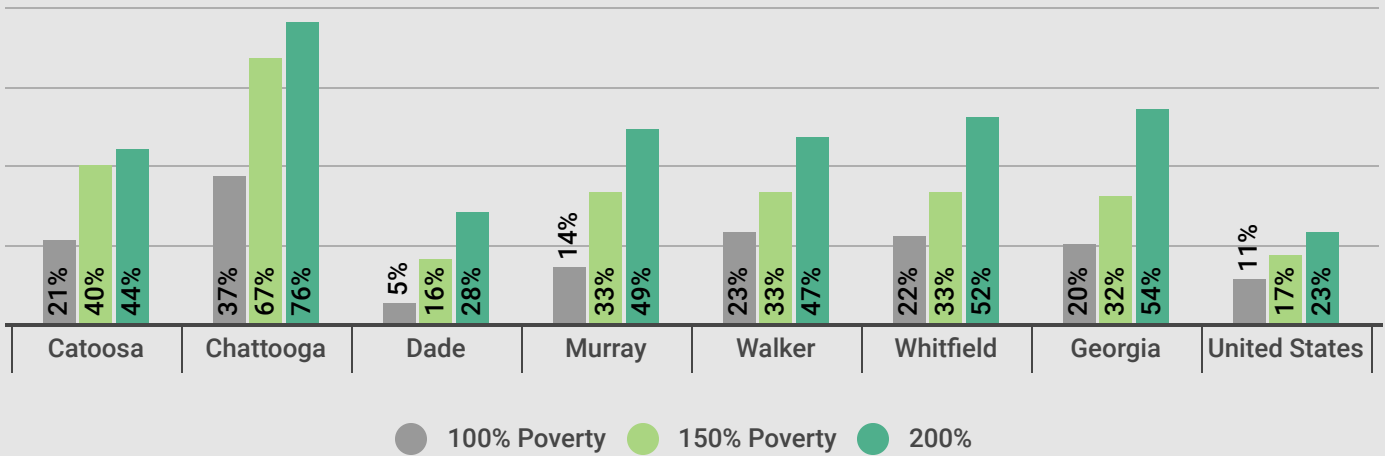
In 2023, poverty rates in the service area ranged from 10.7% in Catoosa County to a high of 20.7% in Chattooga County, reflecting significant economic disparities across the region. The average poverty rate for the service area was 15%, which exceeded both the Georgia state average of 13.6% and the national average of 11.1%. This marked an increase from the 13.6% service area poverty rate reported in 2022.

The rise in poverty rates highlights ongoing challenges for many families, including limited access to stable employment, affordable childcare, and adequate healthcare.



Data obtained from US Census Bureau Quick Facts 2023 (data accessed Jan. 2025.)

Number of Children Under 6 Years Old Living in Poverty



The table compares poverty rates for children under 6 years old in Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray, Walker, and Whitfield counties to Georgia and United States' averages. It presents data for three thresholds: 100%, 150%, and 200% of the poverty level.

100% Poverty Level: Walker (67%) and Whitfield (76%) show the highest rates, significantly above the Georgia (11%) and U.S. (11%) averages.

150% Poverty Level: Whitfield (49%) and Walker (33%) remain considerably above the state (17%) and national (17%) averages.

200% Poverty Level: Whitfield (54%) and Walker (52%) continue to show severe economic challenges compared to Georgia (23%) and the U.S. (23%).

In contrast, Catoosa County has the lowest poverty rates among the listed counties, though still above the national average. This table highlights the stark economic disparities within Georgia, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas.

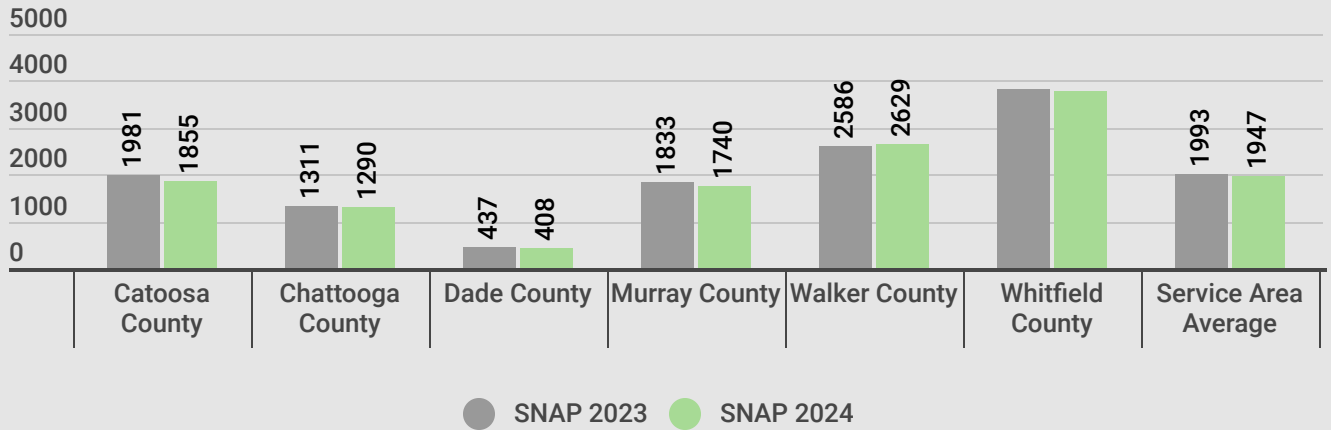
Data obtained from GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students 2023 (accessed Jan 2025)

Georgia Households Receiving SNAP/WIC-Service Area

The data table below indicates a general decline in SNAP participation across the service area counties. This may suggest slight economic improvements, more stringent eligibility requirements, or a reduction in participation due to barriers in accessing benefits.

In contrast to the poverty rates shown on the previous page 14, the continuous reliance on SNAP highlights ongoing economic hardship. High poverty rates, especially in counties like Walker and Whitfield, are reflected in the sustained need for food assistance programs. The county-level participation rates in Catoosa, Dade, and Whitfield are notably lower than both state and national averages, suggesting these counties have fewer individuals relying on SNAP benefits. Chattooga and Murray counties exhibit higher participation rates, indicating a greater proportion of residents facing economic challenges.

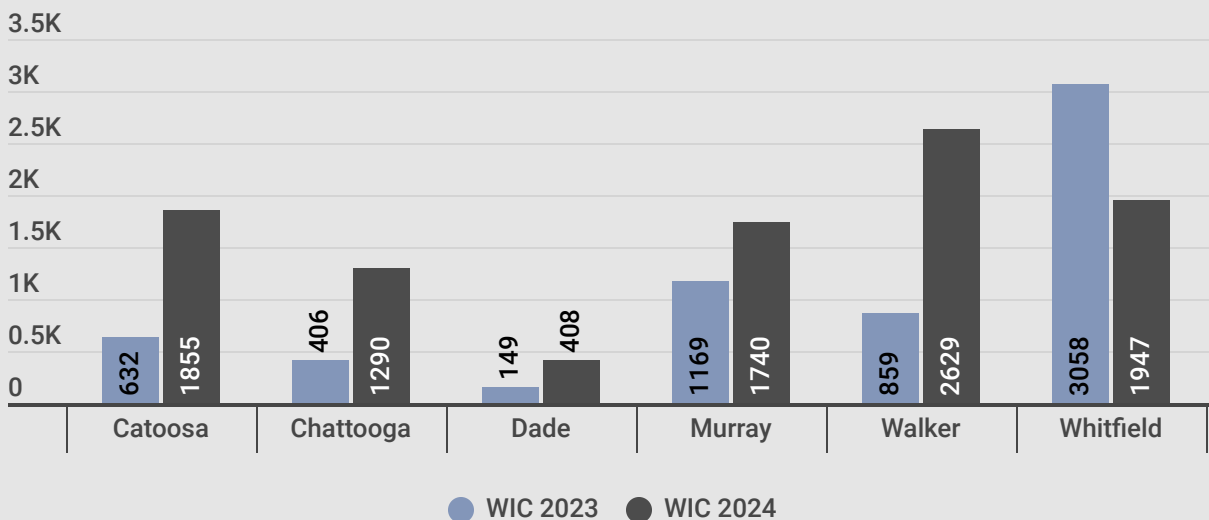
These variations may result from differences in local economic conditions, employment opportunities, and access to assistance programs.



Most service area counties show a significant increase in participation from 2023 to 2024, indicating a growing need or increased outreach efforts for the WIC program.

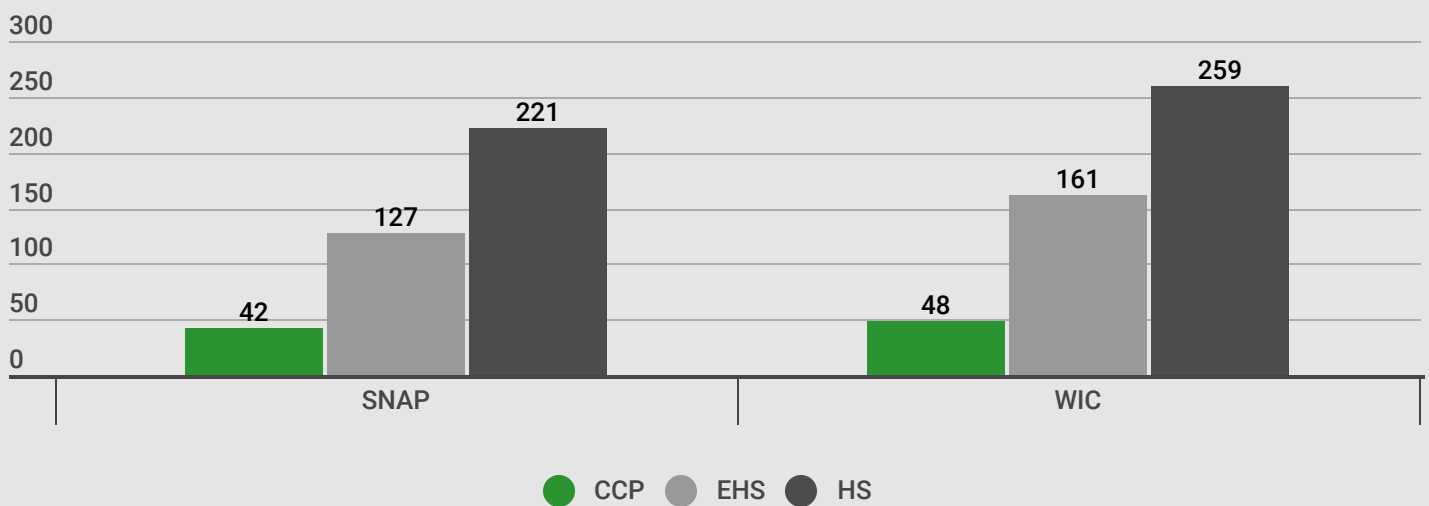
Whitfield County is an exception, where the number of participants decreased from 3,058 in 2023 to 1,947 in 2024. This could be due to various factors such as changes in population, program funding, or local economic conditions.

The data suggests that the WIC program is expanding its reach in most counties, which could lead to better health outcomes for women, infants, and children in these areas:



Families Receiving SNAP/WIC-Family Resource Agency of N. GA.

The chart below illustrates the number of families with children attending Family Resource Agency Head Start who receive benefits from SNAP and/or WIC. To enhance nutritional education among these families, Primary Healthcare has developed a newsletter titled "Nutrition and You," which is distributed to both staff and families. This newsletter encompasses a wide range of topics, including nutritional advice, healthy living tips, and recipes. Additionally, the agency's website provides a link to the USDA-sponsored "My Plate" resource (<https://www.myplate.gov/>), which offers healthy recipes, calorie counters, food information, daily meal planning tools, dietary guidelines, and budget-friendly eating tips. Furthermore, classrooms incorporate nutrition resources such as the "I am Moving, I am Learning" program, integrating nutrition-focused activities into lesson plans and daily classroom activities.



Eligible Infants/Toddlers/Preschool Children-Service Area

Estimate of Eligible Children	Catoosa	Chattooga	Dade	Murray	Walker	Whitfield
# of 0-5 year old children	3,446	1,362	727	2,339	3,613	6,118
X Poverty Rate	10.7%	20.7%	14.1%	14.4%	15.1%	15.5%
Number in Poverty	371	282	103	337	546	948
Divided by # of age groups (1-5 yrs. old)	5	5	5	5	5	5
# eligible by age group	74	56	21	67	109	190
X # of age groups served (3 and 4 yrs)	2	2	2	2	2	2
3 and 4 year old's eligible for HS	148	112	42	134	218	380
3 and 4 year old children served by HS and Pre-K at Family Resource Agency of N. GA	57	17	16	34	162	194
Eligible children 3-4's not served by FRA HS	91	95	26	100	56	186
X # of age groups served (1, 2, and 3 years)	3	3	3	3	3	3
# 0-3 year old's eligible for EHS	222	168	63	201	327	570
0-3 year old children served by EHS and CCP at Family Resource Agency of N. GA	32	40	24	24	56	136
Eligible children 0-3's not served by FRA EHS	190	120	39	177	271	369

This table provides an estimate of eligible children for Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) programs across six counties in North Georgia: Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray, Walker, and Whitfield. Below is a summary of key findings:

Total number of children aged 0-5 years varies across counties, with Whitfield having the highest (6,118) and Dade the lowest (727). Poverty rates are highest in Chattooga (20.7%) and lowest in Catoosa (10.7%).

Head Start (HS) Eligibility (Ages 3-4):

The estimated number of 3- and 4-year-olds eligible for HS is highest in Whitfield (380) and lowest in Dade (42).

The number of children served by HS and Pre-K programs is significantly lower than those eligible. Whitfield, for example, has 380 eligible children but only 194 served, leaving 186 children unserved.

Other counties show similar gaps, with Chattooga having the highest proportion of unserved eligible children (95 out of 112 eligible, or ~85%).

Early Head Start (EHS) Eligibility (Ages 0-3)

Whitfield again has the most EHS-eligible children (570), while Dade has the least (63).

Served children in EHS and CCP (Child Care Partnerships) are far fewer than eligible children, with large service gaps in all counties:

Whitfield: 570 eligible, but only 136 served (434 unserved).

Walker: 327 eligible, only 56 served (271 unserved).

Catoosa: 222 eligible, only 32 served (190 unserved).

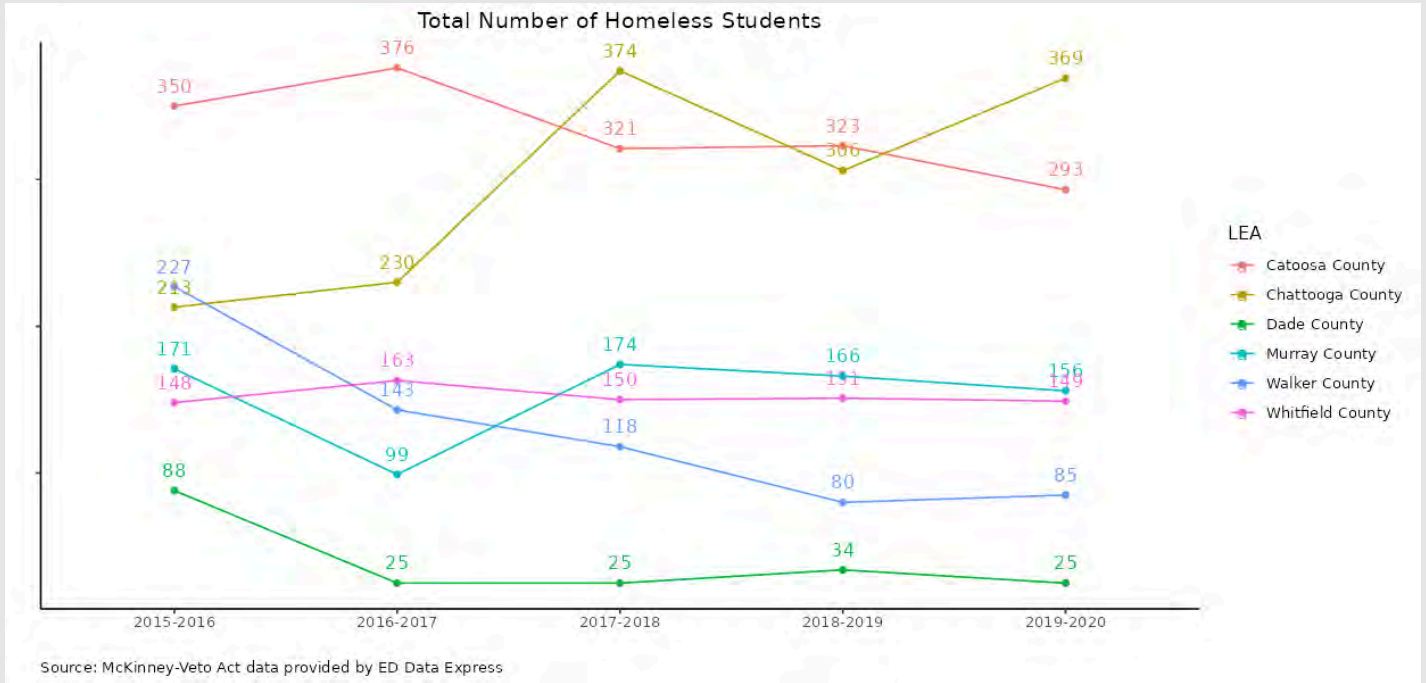
There is a significant gap between the number of eligible children and those being served, particularly in Early Head Start (EHS).

Whitfield County has the largest need across all categories, given its high population and poverty rate.

Chattooga has the highest poverty rate (20.7%) but serves a very small percentage of its eligible children.

Homeless Children Under 18 Years Old in Georgia

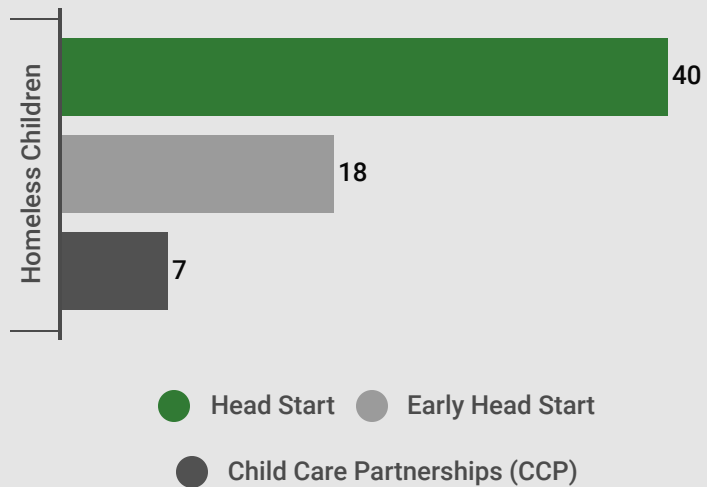
The number and percentage of homeless students under age 18 from 2015-2020 are reflected in the chart below. The total number of homeless students in the service area counties in 2020 range from 25 in Dade County to 369 in Whitfield County. The number of homeless students increased in Chattooga County from 213 in 2015-16 to 369 in 2019-20. Dade and Walker Counties saw significant decreases in the number of homeless students in the 5 year range. (per the definition provided in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act).



During the 2023-24 school year, Family Resource Agency of North Georgia provided support to 65 homeless children, ensuring access to education and essential services. Of these, 40 children were enrolled in Head Start, 18 in Early Head Start, and 7 in the Childcare Partnership Program (CCP).

Four homeless families successfully transitioned into stable housing—one family in the CCP program and three families in Early Head Start.

Family Resource Agency will continue to prioritize the needs of homeless children and their families with a goal to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive in a safe and stable environment.



Foster Children -Service Area

The pie chart below represents the number of foster children in the service area counties. Here is the breakdown:

Catoosa County: 55 foster children (16.7%)

Chattooga County: 30 foster children (9.1%)

Dade: 13 foster children (4.0%)

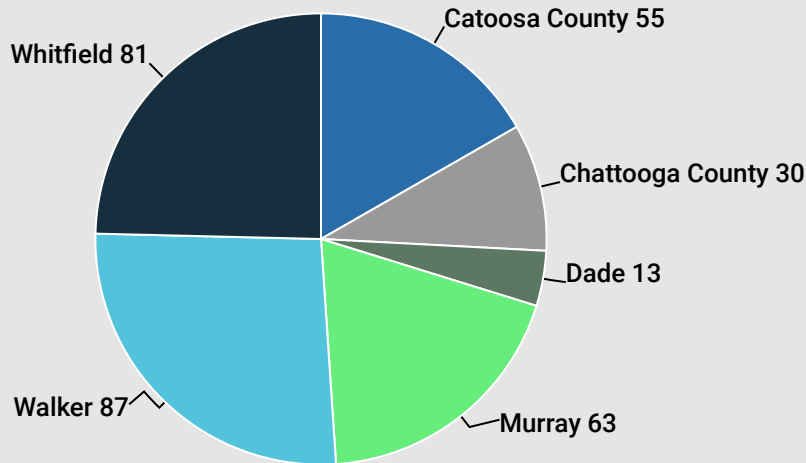
Murray: 63 foster children (19.1%)

Walker: 87 foster children (26.4%)

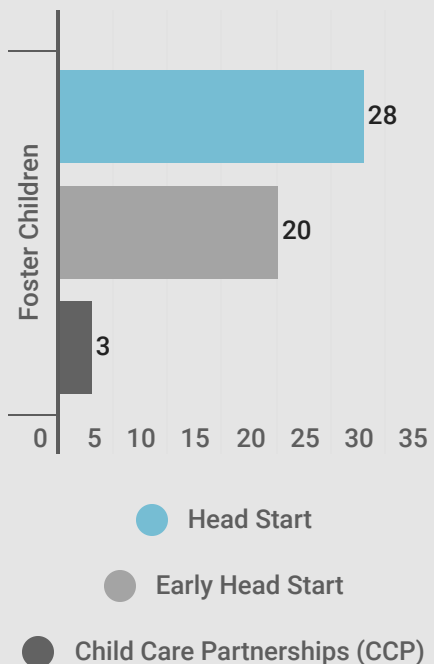
Whitfield: 81 foster children (24.6%)

Summary:

The pie chart illustrates the distribution of foster children across six counties. The total number of foster children is 329. Walker County has the highest number of foster children, followed by Whitfield and Murray counties. Dade County has the lowest number of foster children.



Data obtained from Fostering Court Improvement <https://fosteringcourtimprovement.org> accessed Feb.21, 2025



Head Start Program Benefits for Foster Children:

School Readiness: Provides early childhood education to develop cognitive and social-emotional skills.

Individualized Learning: Tailors learning plans to meet each child's unique needs.

Comprehensive Care: Offers screenings, dental checkups, mental health services, nutrition education, and healthy meals.

Social Skills: Improves social skills, impulse control, and addresses behavioral issues.

Family Engagement: Encourages foster parents' involvement and connects families with community resources.

Long-Term Benefits: Reduces foster care placement and has lifelong positive impacts on academic performance, social skills, and health outcomes.

Overall, Head Start supports foster children holistically, helping them build a strong foundation for future success.

Pediatric Health-Service Area

Family Resource Agency of North Georgia's six-county service area has 21 pediatricians that accept Medicaid; 5 pediatricians in Catoosa County, 2 in Chattooga County, 1 in Dade County, 3 in Murray County, 4 in Walker County and 6 in Whitfield County. There are 8 hospitals located within the service area, with 3 hospitals in Whitfield County and 1 hospital in Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray and Walker counties. In addition, there are 5 hospitals located in Chattanooga, Tennessee that are within 10-50 miles of service area counties; this includes T.C. Thompson Children's Hospital. Within the service area, around 100 pediatricians accept Medicaid and Peach Care. Each of the six service area counties have a local health department that offers immunizations for children and adults; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program: Nutritional support for pregnant women, new mothers, and young children; Family Planning: Services including birth control, pregnancy testing, and counseling.

Primary Health Care Centers in Chattooga, Dade, and Walker counties provide primary healthcare services regardless of the ability to pay and serve patients from all areas, regardless of address. The Child services provided include but are not limited to: acute care visits for sudden unexpected illnesses (colds, flu, allergies, rashes etc.), well-child check-ups, immunizations, and general dentistry.

<https://findaprovider.pshpgeorgia.com/search-results>

According to the 2024 America's Health Ratings from the United Health Foundation, Georgia is ranked 33-a 4 point decrease from a ranking of 37 in 2023; (1=best/50=worst).

In 2024, children aged 0-5 in North Georgia faced several health challenges:

1. Access to Healthcare: Limited access to pediatric care, especially in rural areas, made it difficult for families to receive timely medical attention.
2. Nutrition and Obesity: Poor nutrition and high rates of childhood obesity were significant concerns, contributing to long-term health issues.
3. Mental Health: Early childhood mental health issues, including developmental delays and behavioral problems, were prevalent.
4. Socioeconomic Factors: High levels of poverty and economic hardship impacted children's overall well-being and access to resources.

Data analysis from 2024 reflects that North Georgia's highest child health challenges are:

- High percentage of low birthweight infants (*a baby weighing less than 5.5 lbs.*)
- Low WIC coverage (*Supplemental Nutrition program for woman and children*) among eligible children ages 0-4.
- Low percentage of infants exclusively breastfed for six months.

In 2024, an additional high-priority health condition for children aged 0-5 in North Georgia is childhood obesity. This condition is particularly concerning due to its long-term health implications, including an increased risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

As of 2024, approximately 12.7% of children aged 2-5 in the United States are considered obese. National statistics provide a general idea of the prevalence of obesity in young children in the region. From 2017 to 2020, the prevalence of obesity among U.S. children and adolescents was 19.7%. This means that approximately 14.7 million U.S. youths aged 2-19 years have obesity. For children, obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile for age and sex.

Efforts to address childhood obesity focus on improving nutrition, increasing physical activity, and providing education to families about healthy lifestyle choices. To enhance nutritional education among these families, Primary Healthcare has developed a newsletter titled "Nutrition and You," which is distributed to both staff and families. This newsletter encompasses a wide range of topics, including nutritional advice, healthy living tips, and recipes. Additionally, the agency's website provides a link to the USDA-sponsored "My Plate" resource (<https://www.myplate.gov/>), which offers healthy recipes, calorie counters, food information, daily meal planning tools, dietary guidelines, and budget-friendly eating tips. Furthermore, classrooms incorporate nutrition resources such as the "I am Moving, I am Learning" program, integrating nutrition-focused activities into lesson plans and daily classroom activities. Family Resource Agency uses the I'm Moving, I'm Learning

[https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Overall/GA-\(accessed 2-24-25\)](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Overall/GA-(accessed 2-24-25))

<https://www.americashealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2024-health-of-women-and-children-report/state-summaries-georgia> (accessed 2-25-25)

<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood-obesity-facts/childhood-obesity-facts.html> (accessed 2-25-25).

<https://oasis.state.ga.us/trendingtool/InfantMort> (accessed 2-25-20).

Dental Resources

The service area has over 95 dentists available that accept Medicaid/Peach Care and see children birth-5 years of age. There has been an increase in the total number of pediatric dentists who accept Medicaid and Peach Care. In North Georgia service area counties, there are challenges meeting the dental needs of children birth-5, particularly in the rural areas.

Primary Health Care Centers in Chattooga, Dade, and Walker counties provide healthcare services regardless of the ability to pay and serve patients from all areas, regardless of address and provide general dentistry for children.

While there are dental providers available, the distribution is uneven, and some areas face shortages of pediatric dentists:

1. **Dental Health Provider Shortage Areas:** Many rural parts of North Georgia are designated as Dental Health Provider Shortage Areas (DHPSAs), indicating a lack of sufficient dental professionals to meet the population's needs.
2. **Access to Care:** Limited access to pediatric dental care can result in unmet dental needs for young children, leading to issues such as untreated cavities and other oral health problems.
3. **Family Resource Agency of N. GA** is working to identify pediatric dentists that accept Medicaid/Peach Care or offer no cost, low cost, and sliding scale fees.



County	Dentists-Medicaid and Peach Care Accepted	Serves Birth-Five Year Old Children	Access to Primary Healthcare Dentists
Catoosa	20	20	Yes
Chattooga	10	10	Yes
Dade	5 (Chatt, TN)	5	Yes
Murray	24	24	Yes
Walker	15	15	Yes
Whitfield	24	24	Yes
Totals	95	95	Yes

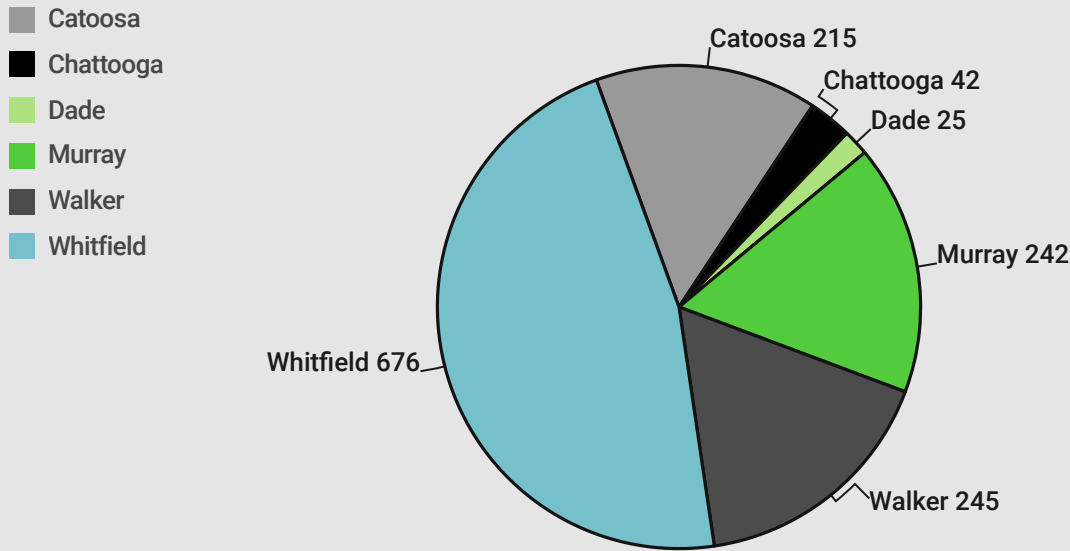
<https://findaprovider.pshpgeorgia.com/search-results>

Mental Health Resources

The six service area counties are supported by the Region One Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) Office. The MHDDAD Office is responsible for planning and overseeing a comprehensive network of public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease, and prevention services across 25 counties. A regional office contact is available, and counties have access to 24-hour emergency assistance. This includes a Georgia Crisis and Access Line, a non-emergency service line for mental health and addictive diseases, as well as a non-emergency line for developmental disabilities services. Additionally, there are seven other local agencies that provide mental health services. Currently, we have a contract with Georgia HOPE to deliver services to our children and families.

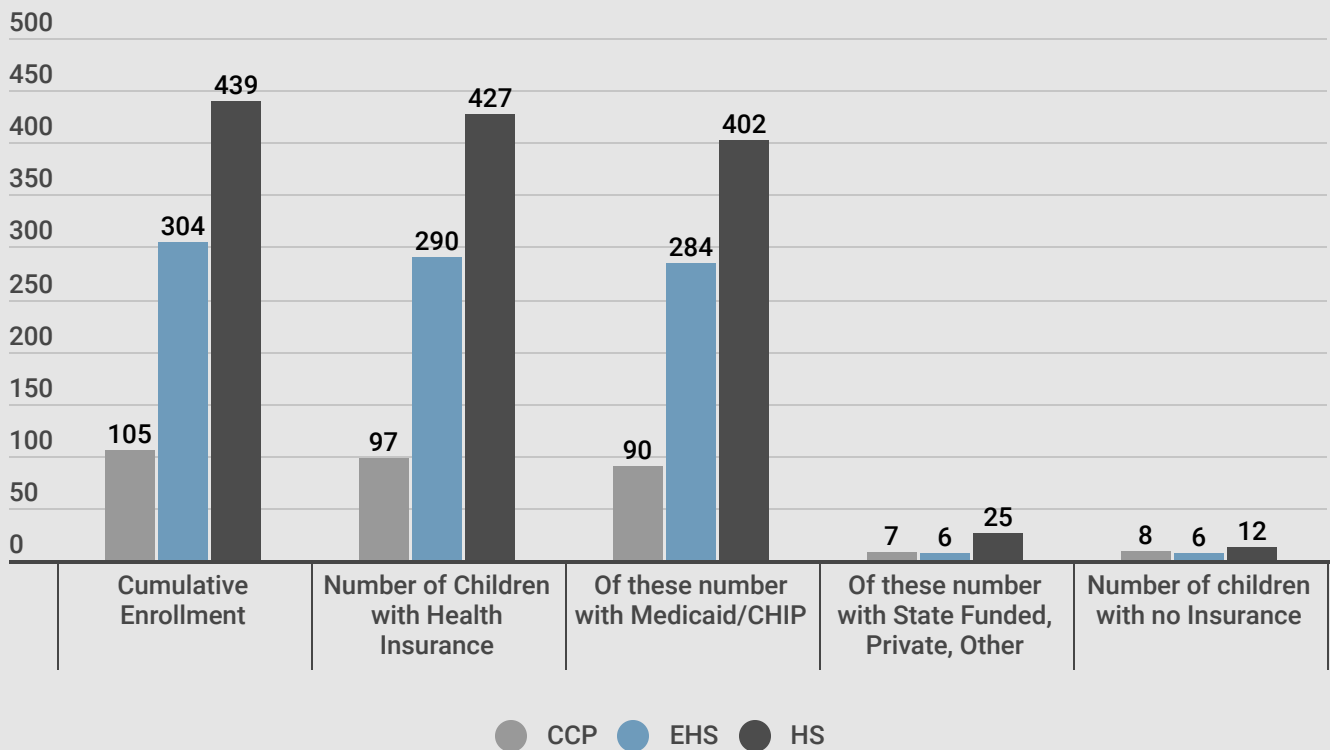
Children-Health Insurance-Service Area

Children Without Insurance by County



Data Obtained from GEEARS County Profiles-accessed Jan.2025

Insurance-Children Attending CCP, Early Head Start, and Head Start at Family Resource Agency of N. GA 2023-2024

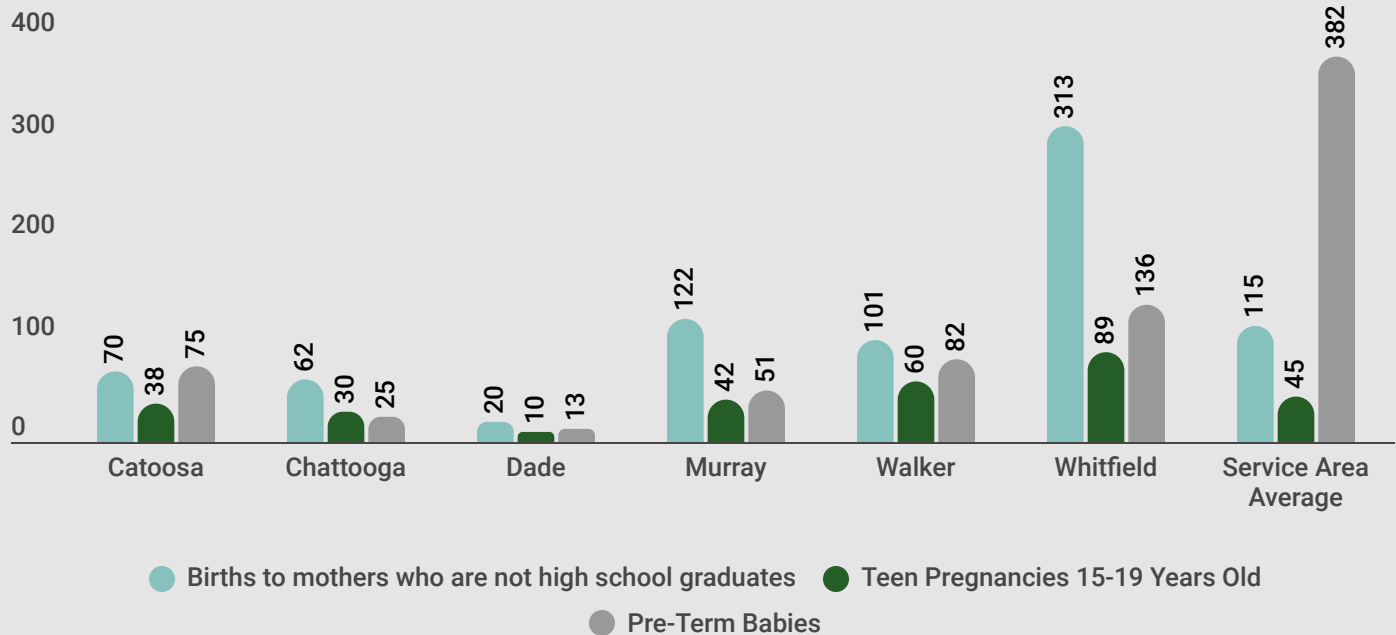


Data Obtained from ChildPlus PIR Report #9900-accessed Jan. 2025

Teen Pregnancy-Service Area

The Service Area Average for births to mothers who are not high school graduates is 115 births; this is the most vulnerable group in the service area ranging from 20 births in Dade County to 313 births in Whitfield County. The Service Area Average for teen pregnancies ages 15-19 is 45 births and range from 10 births in Dade County to 89 births in Whitfield County. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, Georgia's national teen pregnancy rank is number 35 out of 50 states in 2023.

(https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/TeenBirth_MCH/GA.)



Data obtained from GEEARS-Counties 2023/accessed Feb. 2025

Pregnant Moms Served at Family Resource Agency of North Georgia in 2023-2024	8
Mom Enrolled during 1st Trimester	1
Mom Enrolled during 2nd Trimester	3
Mom Enrolled during 3rd Trimester	4
Pregnant Moms with High Risk Pregnancy	0
Received Prenatal Health Care	8
Received Postpartum Health Care	8
Received Education on Fetal Development	8
Received Education on the Benefits of Breast Feeding	8
Received Education on the Importance of Nutrition	8
Received Education on Infant Care and Safe Sleep Practices	8
Received Education on the risks of Alcohol, Drugs, and Smoking	8
Facilitated Access to Substance Abuse Treatment	2

Infant Mortality

	Infant Mortality	Low Birth Weight Babies	Pre-Term Babies
Catoosa	5	57	75
Chattooga	3	16	25
Dade	1	18	13
Murray	3	39	51
Walker	2	70	82
Whitfield	5	85	136

The chart above shows mortality and birth-related statistics for the six service area counties: Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray, Walker, and Whitfield. It includes data on infant mortality, low birth weight babies, and pre-term babies.

Whitfield County has the highest numbers in all categories: 5 infant deaths, 85 low birth weight babies, and 136 pre-term births.

Walker County follows with 2 infant deaths, 70 low birth weight babies, and 82 pre-term births.

Murray County reports 3 infant deaths, 39 low birth weight babies, and 51 pre-term births.

Catoosa County shows 5 infant deaths, 57 low birth weight babies, and 75 pre-term births.

Chattooga County has lower numbers: 3 infant deaths, 16 low birth weight babies, and 25 pre-term births.

Dade County has the lowest numbers: 1 infant death, 18 low birth weight babies, and 13 pre-term births.

Several socioeconomic factors influence infant mortality in Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray, Walker, and Whitfield counties in Georgia, just as they do nationwide. These factors contribute to disparities in birth outcomes and infant health. Here are some of the most significant influences:

1. Poverty & Economic Instability

Lower-income families may struggle to access quality healthcare, nutritious food, and stable housing, all of which are critical for a healthy pregnancy and infant survival. Murray, Chattooga, and Walker counties have higher poverty rates compared to the Georgia state average, which correlates with worse infant health outcomes.

2. Access to Healthcare & Prenatal Care

Limited access to hospitals, obstetricians, and prenatal care services can lead to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Rural areas like Dade and Chattooga counties have fewer healthcare facilities, increasing the risk of preterm births and complications due to inadequate prenatal monitor

3. Education & Health Literacy

Lower levels of maternal education are linked to higher infant mortality rates, as they can impact knowledge about prenatal care, nutrition, and safe infant sleep practices. Counties with lower high school graduation rates may see worse health outcomes due to limited health awareness and fewer economic opportunities.

4. Racial & Ethnic Disparities

Whitfield County has a large Hispanic population, which may face challenges such as language barriers, limited healthcare access, and lack of insurance.

5. Housing & Environmental Factors

Poor housing conditions, crowding, exposure to pollution, or unsafe drinking water can negatively affect infant health. Substandard housing in lower-income areas increases the risk of respiratory illnesses and infections in newborns.

6. Maternal Health & Substance Use

High rates of maternal smoking, substance abuse, and mental health issues contribute to infant mortality through low birth weight, birth defects, and preterm births. In some counties, opioid and methamphetamine use has risen, impacting maternal and infant health outcomes.

7. Availability of Maternal & Infant Support Programs

Limited public health programs can reduce access to nutritional assistance (WIC), home visiting programs, and postpartum care. Rural counties may have fewer social services to support at-risk mothers and infants.

These counties experience varied levels of economic hardship and healthcare access all of which impact infant mortality rates. Addressing these challenges through better healthcare access, education, and support programs can help improve infant health outcomes.

Funded Slots-Family Resource of North Georgia

Family Resource Agency of North Georgia currently operates a program, funded to serve 692 children across six northwest counties: Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Murray, Walker, and Whitfield. The program offers Childcare Partnerships, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Blended Pre-K/Head Start. The agency operates 61 classrooms across 16 centers.

Current funded enrollment slots are distributed as follows:

- **Head Start (HS):** 300 slots, offering preschool education for children ages 3 to 5, emphasizing school readiness through early learning experiences.
- **Blended Pre-K/Head Start:** 80 slots, combining state-funded Pre-K with Head Start services to provide comprehensive educational support while meeting the unique needs of low-income families.
- **Early Head Start (EHS):** 232 slots, designed for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women, providing early developmental support, parent education, and family engagement opportunities.
- **Childcare Partnerships (CCP):** 80 slots, expanding access to Early Head Start services through partnerships with local childcare providers, enhancing the quality of care and education for young children.

	Total Slots	HS Slots	Blended Pre-K/HS Slots	EHS Slots	CCP Slots
Catoosa	69	17	20	16	16
Chattooga	57	17	0	40	0
Dade	40	16	0	24	0
Murray	58	34	0	24	0
Walker	178	82	40	56	0
Whitfield	290	134	20	72	64
Total Slots	692	300	80	232	80

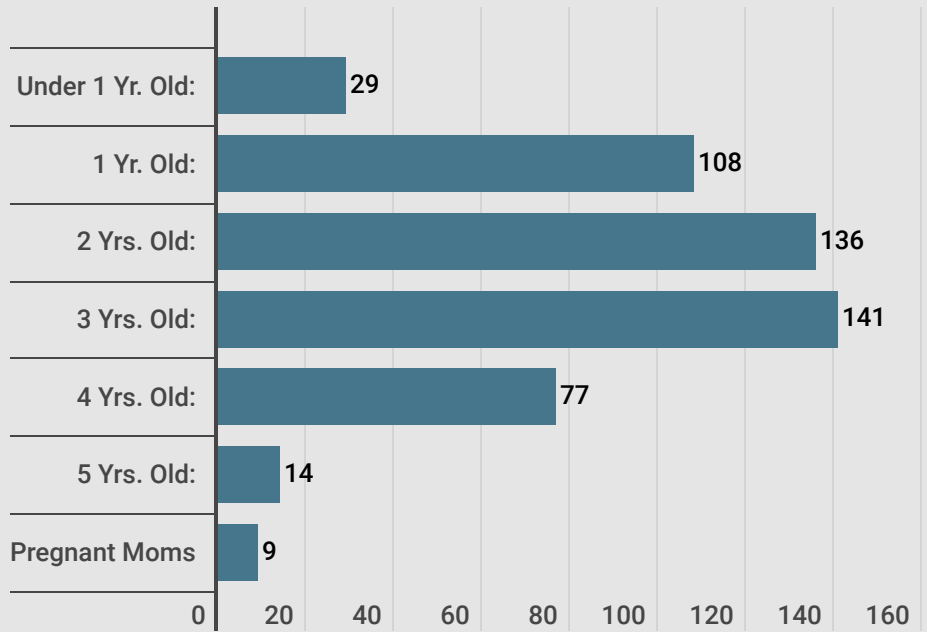
Childplus Report 2001 (grp. by all/region/site/summery and FRAGAHS Staffing Pattern)-accessed Feb. 2025

Program Enrollment-Service Area

County	Children Ages Birth-5 Living Below 100% Poverty	FRAGA HS and Pre-K enrollment	FRAGA EHS/CCP enrollment	Georgia Pre-K enrollment-low income families	Eligible Children Birth-5 not Served by Head Start or Pre-K
Catoosa	920	37	32	177	674
Chattooga	692	17	40	112	523
Dade	46	16	24	36	0
Murray	404	34	24	186	160
Walker	1,029	122	56	180	671
Whitfield	1,732	154	136	397	1,045

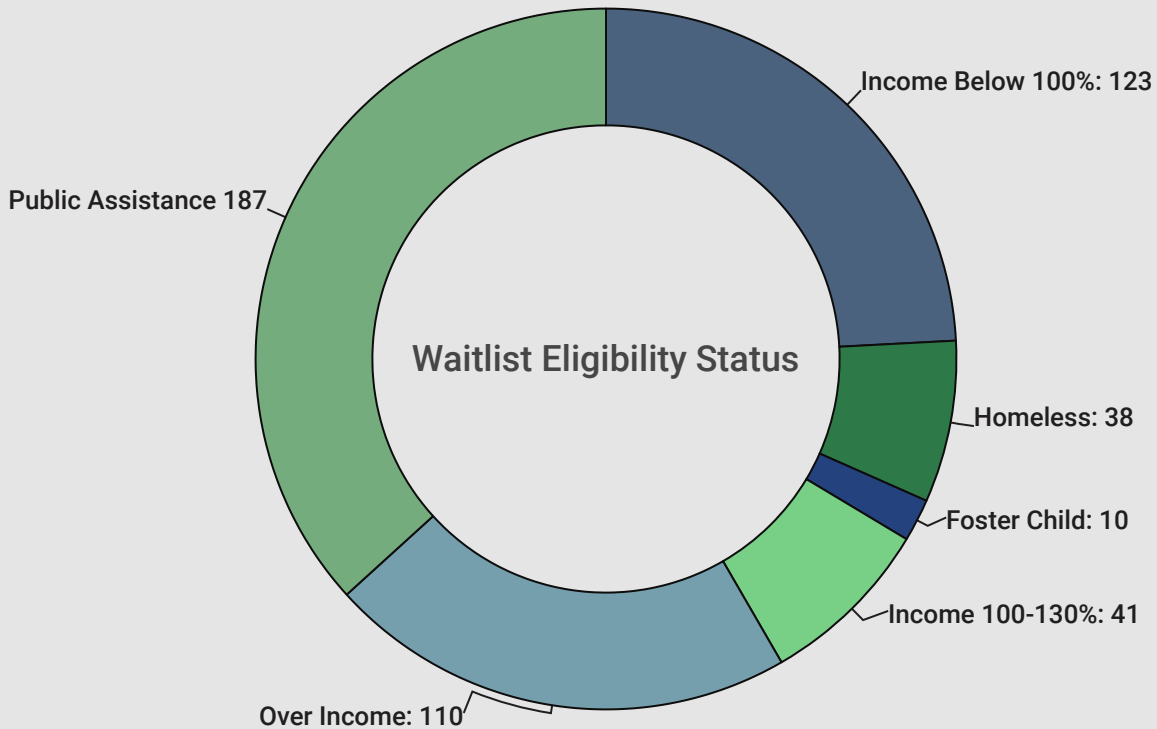
Waitlist 2024-25-Family Resource Agency of N. GA.

The waitlist comprises children who qualify for the Head Start Program but cannot be enrolled immediately due to space limitations. When a Head Start program reaches its capacity, eligible children are added to the waitlist until a vacancy arises. The Bar Chart (right) illustrates the number of children in each age group awaiting enrollment at Family Resource Agency of North Georgia.



ChildPlus Report 2250-Waitlist by Age-accessed Feb. 2025

Childplus Report 2025/complete and verified/oldest first-accessed Feb. 2025



ChildPlus Report 2250-Waitlist by Income Status-Feb. 2025

Centers and Family Care Homes in Service Area

County	Total Providers	Child Care Centers	Serves Infants	Serves Toddlers	Serves Preschoolers	Family Child Care	Other Providers
Catoosa	24	18	67%	78%	100%	0	6
Chattooga	11	6	67%	67%	100%	1	4
Dade	6	3	100%	100%	100%	1	2
Murray	6	4	100%	100%	100%	1	1
Walker	20	10	90%	100%	100%	1	9
Whitfield	39	15	87%	93%	100%	8	16

Program Enrollment in Service Area

	Kindergarten	Lottery Funded Pre-K	-At Risk Served by Pre-K	Head Start/Early Head Start
Catoosa	655	462	37%	177
Chattooga	316	215	59%	81
Dade	153	105	69%	45
Murray	449	279	57%	66
Walker	756	419	51%	98
Whitfield	1,424	813	66%	325

Licensed Capacity in Service Area

	Total Licensed Capacity/Slots	Learning Center Slots	Family Childcare Slots
Catoosa	2,223	2,223	0
Chattooga	458	452	6
Dade	272	266	6
Murray	380	374	6
Walker	1,262	1,256	6
Whitfield	2,132	2,084	48

**Family Resource Agency
of North Georgia
Program Information Data**

Race and Ethnicity-Family Resource Agency of N. GA

PIR 2023-24	Head Start		Early Head Start		Child Care Partners	
	Hispanic/Latino	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic/Latino	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic/Latino	Non-Hispanic
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	1	1	2	0	0
Asian	1	1	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	3	27	2	22	1	8
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	107	248	60	173	30	50
Bi-racial or Multi-racial	12	38	8	36	3	13
Other Race	0	0	3	0	0	0
Total Enrollment	124	315	74	233	34	71

ChildPlus Report 9900-2023-24-accessed March 2025

This table presents the racial and ethnic demographics of children enrolled in programs for the 2023-24 program year:

Enrollment Breakdown by Race & Ethnicity:

White students form the largest group across all programs:

HS: 107 Hispanic/Latino, 248 Non-Hispanic

EHS: 60 Hispanic/Latino, 173 Non-Hispanic

CCP: 30 Hispanic/Latino, 50 Non-Hispanic

Black or African American students are the second largest group, particularly in HS (3 Hispanic/Latino, 27 Non-Hispanic).

Bi-racial/Multi-racial students also have significant representation.

Other racial groups (American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Other) have smaller numbers.

Total Enrollment:

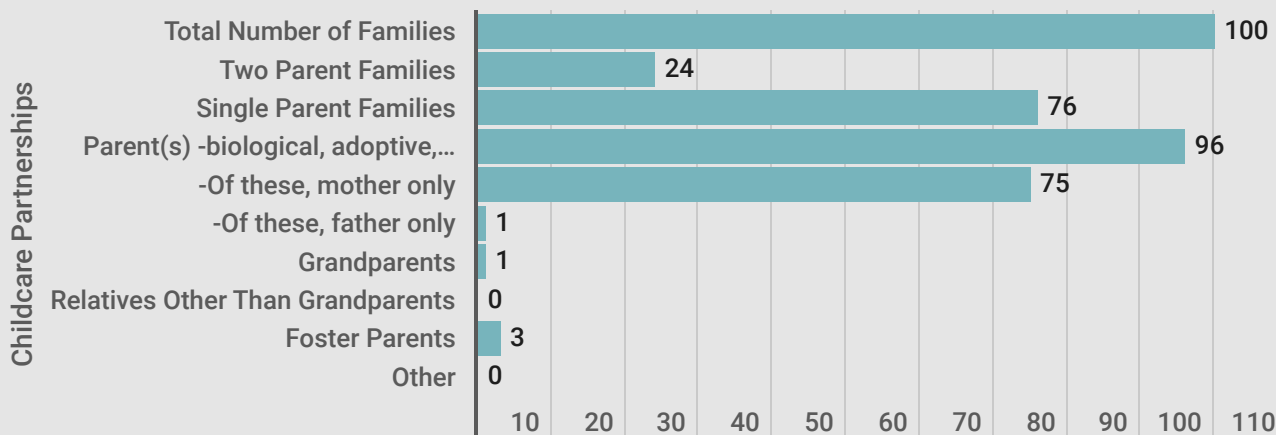
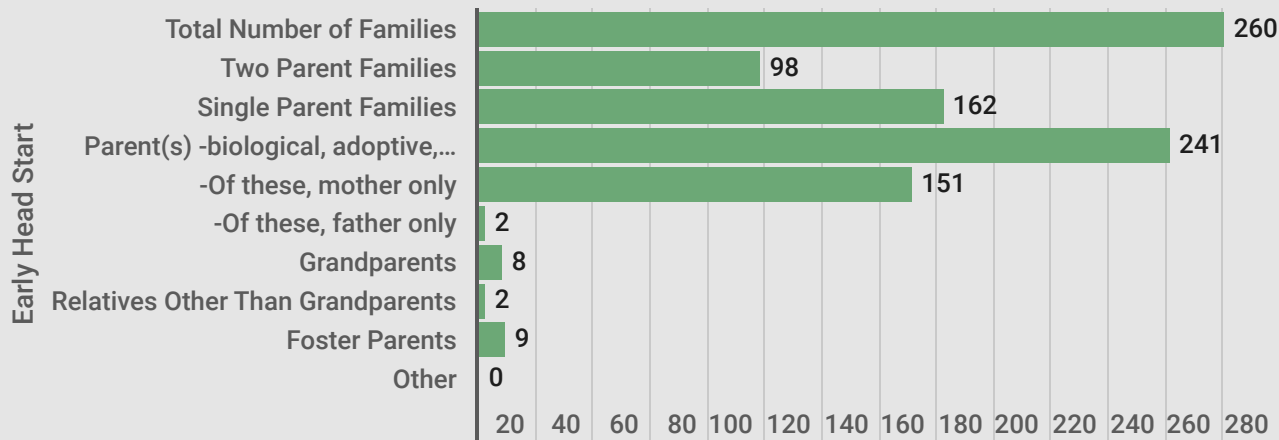
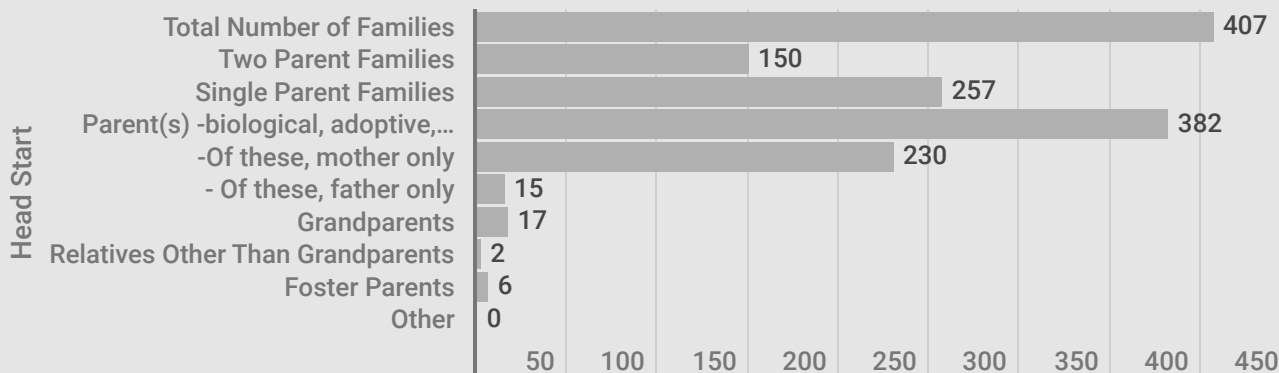
HS: 124 Hispanic/Latino, 315 Non-Hispanic

EHS: 74 Hispanic/Latino, 233 Non-Hispanic

CCP: 34 Hispanic/Latino, 71 Non-Hispanic



Families by Type-Family Resource Agency of N. GA



**Single-parent families are the majority across all programs.
The majority of these are mother-only households.**

Two-parent families are present but in smaller numbers.

**Grandparents and relatives other than grandparents also serve as primary caregivers in some cases.
Foster parents and "Other" categories remain very minimal.**

Parent Education-Family Resource Agency of N. GA-PIR

2023-2024	Head Start	Early Head Start	Childcare Partnerships (CCP)
Total Number of Families	473	260	100
Less than High School	81	58	25
High School Graduate/GED	266	167	67
Associate/Vocational/Some College	46	23	7
Advanced or BA Degree	14	12	1

The table above breaks down the educational attainment of families enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, and Childcare Partnerships (CCP).

Less than High School: The lowest education level, with 81 families in Head Start, 58 in Early Head Start, and 25 in CCP.

High School Graduate/GED: The largest group, with 266 families in Head Start, 167 in Early Head Start, and 67 in CCP.

Associate/Vocational/Some College: Moderate education level, with 46 families in Head Start, 23 in Early Head Start, and 7 in CCP.

Advanced or BA Degree: The smallest group, with 14 families in Head Start, 12 in Early Head Start, and just 1 in CCP.

The majority of families have a high school diploma or GED, while fewer families have higher education degrees.

Parent Employment/Job Training/School-Family Resource Agency of N. GA-PIR

2023-2024	Head Start	Early Head Start	Child Care Partnerships
Total Number of Families	407	260	100
At least 1 parent/guardian is employed, in job training, or in school:	304	207	67
Of these families, the number in which one or more parent/guardian is employed:	299	187	65
Of these families, the number in which one or more parent/guardian is in job training (job training program, professional certificate, apprenticeship, or occupational license):	87	60	18
Of these families, the number in which one or more parent/guardian is in school (GED, associate, bachelor, or advanced degree):	12	22	4
Neither/no parent/guardian is employed, in job training, or school (unemployed, retired, disabled):	103	72	26

Families in these counties face several challenges impacting education and employment opportunities:

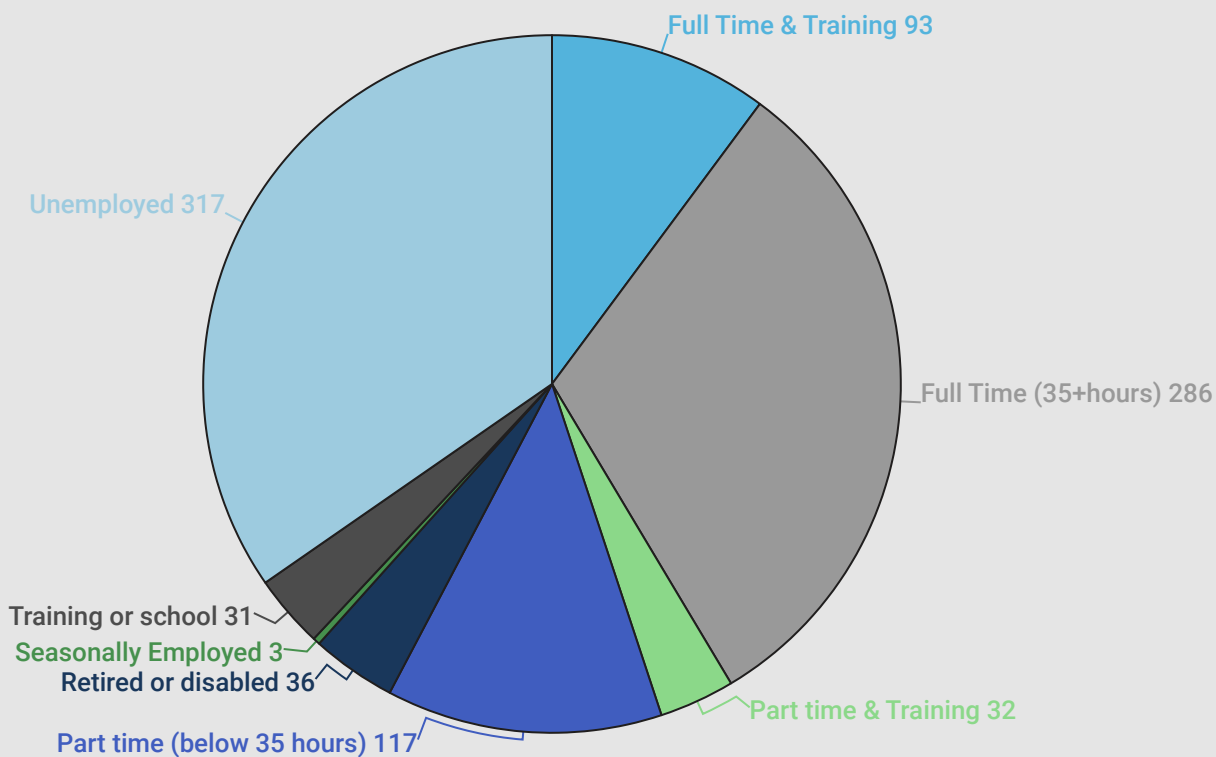
Education Barriers: Limited access to higher education and job training programs, along with generational educational gaps, restrict economic mobility.

Employment & Economic Hardships: Many jobs are low-wage with minimal benefits, and unemployment remains a concern, especially for families without access to job training.

Childcare & Transportation Issues: Affordable childcare is lacking, and rural areas lack public transportation, making it difficult for parents to work or attend school.

Addressing these challenges through better education, job training, childcare support, and social services can help families achieve stability and growth.

Parent Employment, School, and Job Training-Family Resource Agency of N. GA PIR



The total number of families being served in 2024-2025 Head Start, Early Head Start/Pre-K, and CCP is 767.

High Unemployment & Economic Struggles:

Over 40% (317 families) are unemployed, indicating a need for job opportunities, vocational training, and workforce development. Many jobs in the region are low-wage, with limited full-time employment options.

Limited Job Training & Education Access:

Only 93 families balance full-time work with training, and 31 families are solely in training/school, highlighting barriers to higher education and skill development.

Childcare & Transportation Barriers:

Parents working part-time or unemployed may struggle due to a lack of affordable childcare and limited public transportation, making it harder to find and keep jobs.

With a large unemployed population and many families in low-wage or part-time jobs, families could benefit from job training programs, expanded childcare access, and improved employment opportunities.

Disabilities-Family Resource Agency of N. GA-PIR

The program remains dedicated to supporting children with special needs, consistently exceeding the requirement to have at least 10% of funded enrollment comprised of children with disabilities.

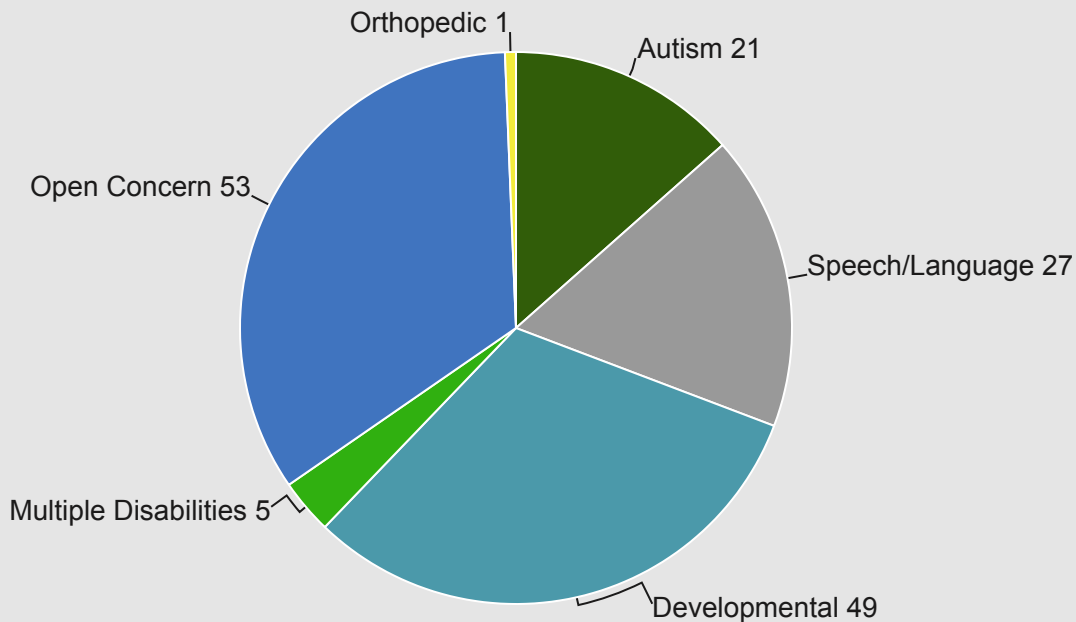
During the 2023-2024 school year, the agency was funded for 380 Head Start children, with an annual cumulative enrollment of 442. Among these, 70 children were identified with a diagnosed disability, representing 18.4% of the funded enrollment. In Early Head Start, the agency was funded for 232 children, with a total cumulative enrollment of 284 children enrolled throughout the year. Of these, 26 children had a diagnosed disability, making up 11.2% of the funded enrollment. Additionally, in our CCP classes, the agency was funded for 80 children and enrolled 104 children over the school year. Twelve children were diagnosed with a disability, accounting for 15% of the funded enrollment. Overall, 15.6% of all enrolled children across the programs had a diagnosed disability.

Collaborative recruitment efforts with local school systems and Babies Can't Wait have proven successful. Both Part B and Part C providers have played a pivotal role in welcoming and providing essential services to children with disabilities.

In Georgia, the state offers additional support for undiagnosed children aged 3 and older through the "Response to Intervention" (RTI) plan. This approach provides targeted enrichment interventions to gather further data, helping determine whether a child requires an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The agency's unwavering commitment to children with special needs remains evident as we continue to exceed expectations and ensure all children receive the support and services they need to thrive.

Program Wide Disability Summary 2023-2024



Customer Survey Results 2024-2025

Participating Families: 2023-24 results below-2024-25 results pending

Survey Monkey was used to gather information from families about the program. 720 responses were received. The families are given the opportunity to express opinions in a variety of areas that help to improve the services we provide.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the majority of surveys indicated the services provided are excellent or satisfactory. The lowest scoring question was regarding how well the class schedule meets families' needs (4% somewhat satisfied or not satisfied).

The main results were:

*Question-Regarding the process for enrolling your child in this program, how would you rate your experience?
98% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

*Question-Regarding what is the program's reputation in the community?
97% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

*Question-Our goal is to provide a safe and learning filled classroom environment with staff who are concerned about each child. Tell us how well you think we did on accomplishing that goal?
99% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

*Question-Regarding the quality of other staff, besides the classroom staff, that families have dealt with this year?
97% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

* Question-Regarding the communication between staff and parents?
98% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

*Question-"Regarding how well parent meetings met your interests and needs?"
96% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

*Question-"Regarding how well the class schedule meets families' needs?"
96% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

* Question-In regard to how much learning or progress child has made this year in the program?
99% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

* Question-Regarding overall experience with the program?
99% scored this as excellent or satisfactory.

*Question-Regarding how families learned about the program?
Friends or family (56%), other child previously attended (17%), Facebook/social media (13%).

*Question regarding what can be improved in the program?
Menu/foods children like, extend hours/provide after school care, different drop off time, communication, parent resources.

Program Staff Survey Results 2024-2025

Microsoft Forms surveys were used to collect insights from Family Service Specialists who work closely with families throughout the year. These specialists assist parents in achieving personal and family goals, develop Family Partnership Agreements, provide referrals to essential services, and gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs of families and communities.

The main results were:

Catoosa County

- Family Service Specialists reported gaps in community awareness and limited job opportunities for parents without transportation. Suggestions include increasing outreach efforts and hosting community events. Strengths include strong educational support and sustainable family programs. Challenges include job accessibility and transportation. Community partnerships include local health departments and libraries. Transit services and carpooling are recommended for transportation needs.

Chattooga County

- Family Service Specialists reported a significant lack of childcare options, exacerbated by the closure of a local center. Recommendations include reopening centers and providing more childcare for working families. Challenges include long waitlists and limited resources. Collaboration with family connections and resource centers is common. Carpooling is the main transportation support suggested.

Dade County

- Family Service Specialists highlighted issues with school system coordination, lack of extended daycare, and disability support for children. Improvements suggested involve streamlining communication between Head Start and schools. Strengths include dedicated staff ensuring children's health needs are met. Challenges revolve around finding extended childcare options. Community partners include local churches, family services, and transit services, with families encouraged to arrange carpools.

Murray County

- Family Service Specialists identified transportation barriers and long waitlists as key issues. Suggestions include increasing class capacity and encouraging parental involvement. Strengths include goal-setting support and resilient family networks. Challenges include insufficient childcare hours. Partnerships include the Salvation Army, local health departments, and educational institutions. Parents are encouraged to build support networks for transportation assistance.

Walker County

- Family Service Specialists noted gaps in services for children with severe special needs and limited local medical and dental care. Improvements suggested include centralized medical coordination. Strengths include safety and comprehensive educational support. Challenges include accessing medical services and overcoming stigma. Community partners consist of family support organizations and local schools. Carpooling remains a primary transportation solution.

Whitfield County

- Family Service Specialists reported gaps in transportation, comprehensive health services, and childcare. Suggested improvements include offering longer service hours, increasing parental involvement, and expanding health services. Strong points include a holistic educational approach and robust family involvement. Challenges involve economic hardship and limited childcare options. Community partners include healthcare providers, food banks, and advocacy centers. Carpooling is a common transportation solution.

Summary of Survey Results-Family Service Specialists	
Gaps	Transportation, extended hours for childcare, comprehensive health services
Challenges	Long waitlists, limited extended daycare hours, more support for children with special needs
Suggested Improvements	Expanding childcare options, offering longer service hours, increasing parental involvement, improving coordination with schools
Strengths	Strong community networks, resilience among families, comprehensive educational and support services provided by Head Start
Partnerships	Local organizations, schools, health providers
Transportation	Carpooling, as transit services are costly and commonly inaccessible in the rural counties

School System Surveys

Surveys were sent to school systems and community partners within the service area to collect data about the communities and to identify how Family Resource Agency of North Georgia can help with these challenges.

School Systems-number of children enrolled in kindergarten and first grade, number of those receiving free/reduced lunch, and number of those with disabilities:

Murray County	Enrolled in Kindergarten	Free Reduced Lunch in Kindergarten	Disabilities in Kindergarten	Enrolled in 1st grade	Free/Reduced Lunch in 1st grade	Disabilities in 1st grade
Chatsworth Elem.	83	55	5	88	63	18
Coker Elem.	77	60	5	76	54	12
Eton Elem.	72	46	4	59	44	5
Northwest Ele.	67	43	6	68	45	7
Spring Place Elem.	80	49	11	99	74	13
Woodlawn Elem.	53	32	9	64	45	8

Murray County Schools are participating in the CEP program which gives students free lunch. This has decreased the number of families who may fill out free/reduced lunch paperwork. The above numbers reflect those who qualified automatically due to receiving federal or state aid-Tim Wright-Murray County Superintendent.

Walker County	Enrolled in Kindergarten	Free/reduced Lunch in Kindergarten	Disabilities in Kindergarten	Enrolled in 1st grade	Free/reduced Lunch in 1st grade	Disabilities in 1st grade
Chattanooga Valley	58	58	12	54	54	12
Cherokee Ridge	81	81	12	94	94	11
Fairyland	53	53	5	42	42	1
Gilbert	67	67	8	93	93	16
Naomi	57	57	6	38	38	4
North Lafayette	54	54	7	71	71	9
Rock Spring	67	67	5	68	68	11
Rossville	62	62	7	75	75	9
Stone Creek	63	63	7	71	71	11
Saddle Ridge	67	67	7	57	57	12

Surveys were received from Murray and Walker County; other service area school systems did not respond to the survey.

School System Survey Results

School System	Strengths	Challenges	How can Head Start help address the challenges?
Murray County	Strong Sense of community, faith based assistance, Chamber of Commerce improvements and partnerships	Poverty, Disrupted family structures, lack of transportation and resource options.	Allow a better partnership with school system by allowing more access to support services through accepting our background checks and security measures.
Walker County	Schools are a hub for needed resources well beyond academic support, school workers, counselors, all staff help; strong support for schools and education from the business community and faith based organizations.	Need for mental health and behavior support services for students and families; Lack of readily available and affordable public transportation; Parent education on the critical importance of early literacy, many families lacking literacy skills.	NA

Murray County boasts a strong sense of community, supported by faith-based assistance and improvements through the Chamber of Commerce partnerships. However, the county faces challenges such as poverty, disrupted family structures, and a lack of transportation and resource options. It is suggested that there be a better partnership with Head Start and the school system by allowing more access to support services through accepting background checks and security measures.

Tim Wright: Superintendent.

Walker County, schools serve as a hub for essential resources beyond academic support, with strong backing from the business community and faith-based organizations. Despite this, there is a need for mental health and behavior support services for students and families, affordable public transportation, and parent education on early literacy, as many families lack literacy skills

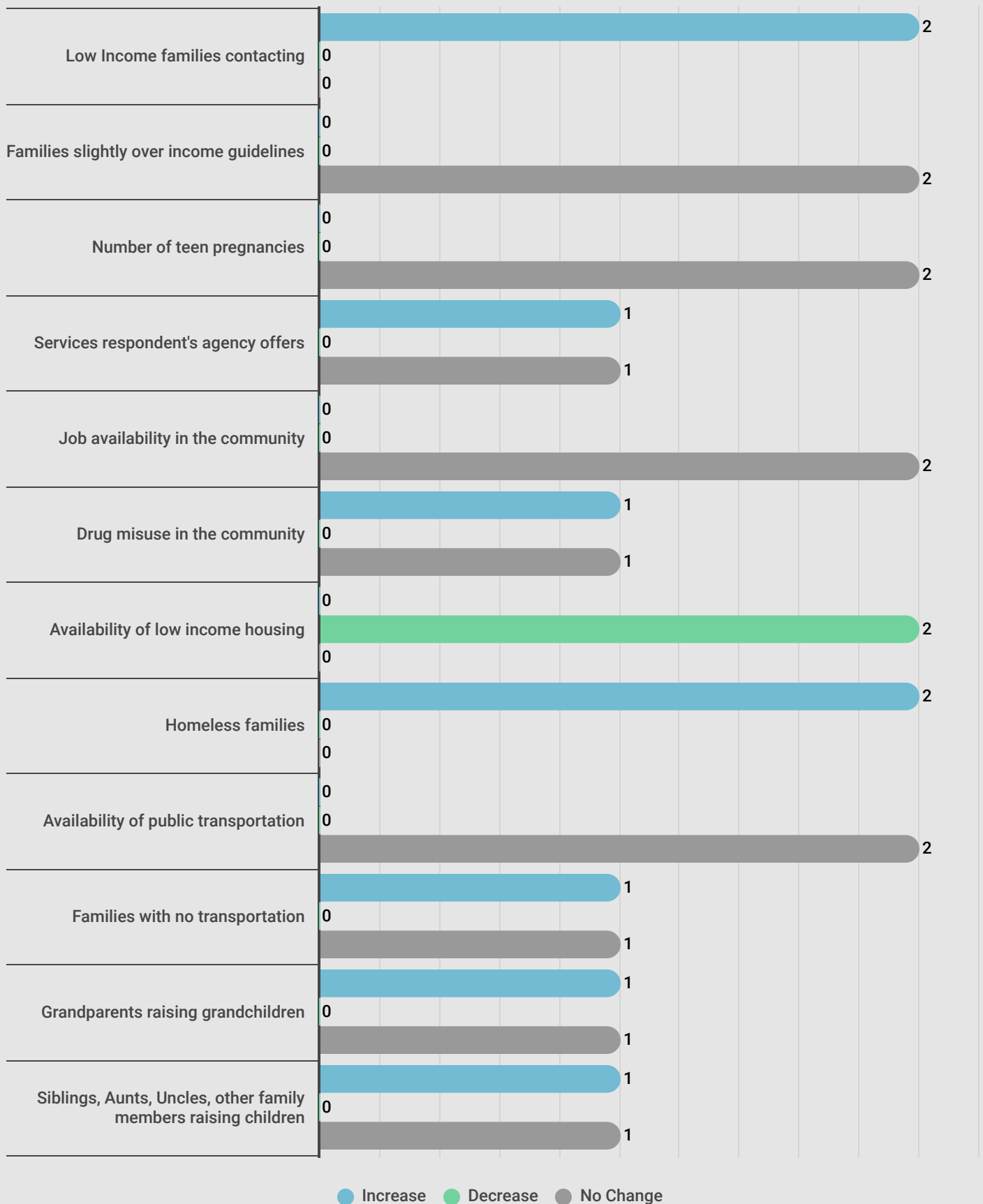
Amy Ashley: Student Information System.

	Greatest Concentration of low-income children and families in the area
Murray County	All are high poverty (80%), maybe a few more on South end.
Walker County	Rossville Elem. and Stone Creek (North end) and Gilbert and Naomi (South end).

Surveys were received from Murray and Walker County; other service area counties did not respond to the survey.

Community Partner Survey Results

Respondents were asked to indicate if increases, decreases, or changes had been observed within their agencies (in the last 12 months).



Community Partner Survey Results

Title/Agency	County Served	Services Provided	Fees Based on Income	Sliding Scale Based on Income	Community Strengths	Community Challenges
Dade County Schools-Director of Federal Programs	Dade	Provides resources to families within schools such as mental health resources, homeless resources (clothing/school supplies), and a social worker to assist families in need.	No	NA	Many agencies & faith based organizations available to help; small town & people always willing to help; Dade 1st Organization bring many community partners together quarterly.	Early Screening Opportunities
Walker County-School Social Worker	Walker County	Education, financial assistance, resources, and food support	NA	NA	Church partnerships; food boxes and pantries; Help a Child Smile.	Low Income before and after care; availability of mental health services; stable housing.

School System & Community Partners Responses:

The Head Start Program makes every effort to operate on a schedule that is close to the local school system's schedules. Typically Head Start children attend 6.5 hours per day.

Do you feel this schedule meets the needs of the families? If not, how many hours per day would better meet their needs?

Agency	County	Does the Head Start schedule meet children's needs?	If not, how many hours per day would meet children's needs?
Dade County Schools-Director of Federal Programs	Dade	Yes	NA
Murray County Superintendent	Murray	Yes	NA
Walker County Schools-Social Worker	Walker	Some	Some, yes. Several families struggle with work schedule, need childcare later in the afternoon.
Walker County-Student Information Systems	Walker	Yes	NA

Analysis

To address the identified challenges and further strengthen its impact, Family Resource Agency of North Georgia will work to implement the following strategies:

Early Head Start and Childcare Services: Advocate for a budget increase to offer extended hours, to better support working families. Additional services are needed for pregnant women, teen moms, and children from birth to age three. Many eligible infants and toddlers lack necessary support. The most vulnerable group in our area are girls without high school diplomas, facing high pregnancy rates and teen pregnancy rates among girls aged 15-19 are also significantly high.

Enhance Transportation Support: Encourage and communicate with parents about carpooling more; public transportation in the rural counties have barriers for scheduling and efficient pick up/drop off times and cost. Will continue to research transportation options in the rural counties to reduce barriers.

Increase Dental Care Access: Explore partnerships with local dental providers to offer mobile clinics, on-site dental services, low cost/free services for children birth-5 years old.

Strengthen Parental Support and Education: Explore and identify resources for parents to complete their high school diploma (GED) to enable them to pursue higher education and vocational training. Having access to high quality childcare enables parents to attend school, job training, and/or work to improve their quality of life and reach their life goals.

Address Housing and Economic Hardship: Collaborate with local housing agencies and nonprofits to provide families with housing assistance and financial literacy resources. Assist families in accessing SNAP, WIC, and other support programs.

Promote Community Awareness and Engagement: Continue marketing to increase awareness of Family Resource Agency Head Start. Participate in local events, partner with community groups, and utilize social media to reach underserved families.

Continue Bilingual Support: Continue prioritizing the hiring of bilingual staff to ensure effective communication with Spanish-speaking families especially in Whitfield County. Hiring bilingual staff ensures that children's developmental screenings and assessments are completed in the native language as needed. Families also have available assistance as needed to communicate with community agencies and service providers and partners.

Survey	Community Challenges
Customer Survey	Pending Results
Program Staff	Long waitlists, limited extended child care hours, need more support for children with special needs.
Public School System	Better partnership for more access to support services.
Community Partners	Early screening opportunities, income-based care, mental health services, stable housing.

By identifying challenges and setting goals to continuously improve, Family Resource Agency of North Georgia can enhance its service delivery, reduce barriers for families, and ensure that all children have access to the resources they need for a strong start in life.



Resources:

American Community Surveys <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/>

ChildPlus PIR and Reports 2022, 2023, 2024

ECLKC <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

gapha.org Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2009

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, <http://geears.org/>

Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) <http://arcgis.com/>

Georgia Department of Public Health <https://dph.georgia.gov/>

Georgia Department of Education <http://www.gadoe.org/>

<https://www.house.ga.gov> Infant Mortality in Rural Georgia

https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Documents/McKinney-Vento/2019EHCY_DataReport.pdf

Kid's Count Data Center <https://datacenter.kidscount.org>

<https://oasis.state.ga.us>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> Infant Mortality and Social Environment in Georgia

<https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/Perinatal-Infant Health Annual Report>

US Census Bureau Quick Facts <https://www.census.gov/>

US Census Bureau/American Community Surveys 2017-2021

Community Assessment created using Infogram (infogram.com)

